

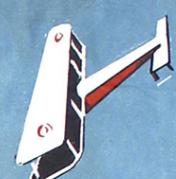
PAST FORWARD

Produced by Wigan Archives & Museums

Issue No. 79

August - November 2018

Come to Wigan



£2



Wigan and Leigh's local history magazine

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FRONT COVER

'Come to Wigan' poster,
Wigan Archives, MP25/572

Letter from the Editorial Team

Welcome to Past Forward, Issue 79!

Welcome to the new edition of Past Forward, number 79. It is wonderful to reflect that the magazine, started back in the summer of 1991, is still going strong, with the next edition our 80th birthday! As ever, we couldn't produce Past Forward without the many contributions that land in our inbox ready for each new edition, so thank you to all the historians, writers and authors who freely offer up their research to share with our readers.

This edition has something of a campaigning and social justice theme. Brian Joyce's fascinating research continues to reveal more hidden stories of the lives of black and minority ethnic people living in the Borough. Yvonne Eckersley and Hannah Turner offer further investigations of the campaign for women's suffrage and employment rights, whilst Thomas McGrath shares his study of the life of the Atherton philanthropist, Sarah Hesketh.

Elsewhere in the Archives and Museum services, work continues on our Revealing Wigan Archives project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. To allow work to be completed in Leigh Town Hall, the Archives & Leigh Local Studies will be moving to a temporary home in Leigh Library. The service will be closed between early August and the end of October to move the searchroom facilities to the Library and carry out work on the collections. Services will continue as normal at Wigan Local Studies and researchers wishing to access the archive collections are advised to get in touch before visiting. For more information, please contact archives@wigan.gov.uk or visit our website for updates on availability of collections.

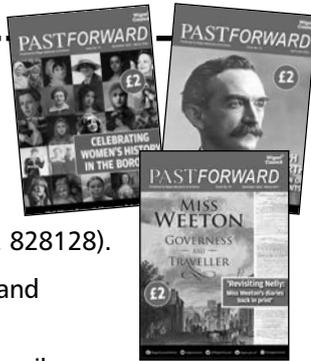
It is with great sadness that we report the death of Bill Melling, volunteer for many years at the Archives and a regular contributor to Past Forward. Regular readers will have enjoyed his many fascinating articles, reminiscing about his own childhood and growing up on the Haigh estate, as well as his research into the life of Edward Hall, our well-known diary collector. The Past Forward team wish to convey our deepest sympathies to Bill's family and we are sure all our readers will share in thinking of them.

Information for contributors, please see page 33

PAST FORWARD Subscription Form

Copy Deadline for Issue 80

Contributors please note the deadline for the receipt of material for publication is Friday, 19th October 2018.



Past Forward Subscription

Magazine subscription is £9 for three issues (incl. UK delivery). Payment by cheque (payable to Wigan Council), postal order or credit/debit card (telephone 01942 828128).

For worldwide subscription prices and information, please contact us.

Digital subscription (delivered by email, worldwide) is £6 per year. Payment options as above.

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Please tick here if you would like to receive information regarding Wigan Museums & Archives activities and events. We do not pass your details to other organisations.

Return to: The Museum of Wigan Life, Past Forward Subscription, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU or email us at archives@wigan.gov.uk

Name

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Write 1000 words - Win £100!

Do you have a passion for local history? Is there a local history topic that you would love to see featured in Past Forward? Then why not take part in Wigan Borough Environment and Heritage Network's Local History Writing Competition?

Local History Writing Competition

1st Prize - £100

2nd Prize - £75

3rd Prize - £50

Five Runners-Up Prizes of £25

The Essay Writing Competition is kindly sponsored by Mr and Mrs J. O'Neill.



Winners from the Past Forward Essay Competition 2017

Criteria

- Articles must be a maximum of 1000 words.
 - Articles must focus on a local history topic within the geographical boundaries of Wigan Borough.
 - By entering the competition you agree to your work being published in Past Forward. The winning article will be published in Past Forward and other submissions may also be published.
- If selected for publication the Past Forward Editorial Team may edit your submission.

How to enter

- Articles must be received by e-mail or post by Monday 1 October 2018.
- Electronic submissions are preferred although handwritten ones will be accepted.
- You must state clearly that your article is an entry into the Local History Writing Competition.
- You must include your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address (if applicable). We will not pass your details on to anyone.

- It will not be possible for articles to be returned.
- You are welcome to include photographs or images however they cannot be returned.

Submit to

pastforward@wigan.gov.uk

OR

Local History Writing Competition,
Past Forward, Museum of Wigan Life,
Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU

Black Families By Brian Joyce in Victorian Leigh and Tyldesley

My previous article on black people in the Leigh area focussed mainly on visiting clergy and entertainers. This time I will discuss some of those who settled or who were born in the district.

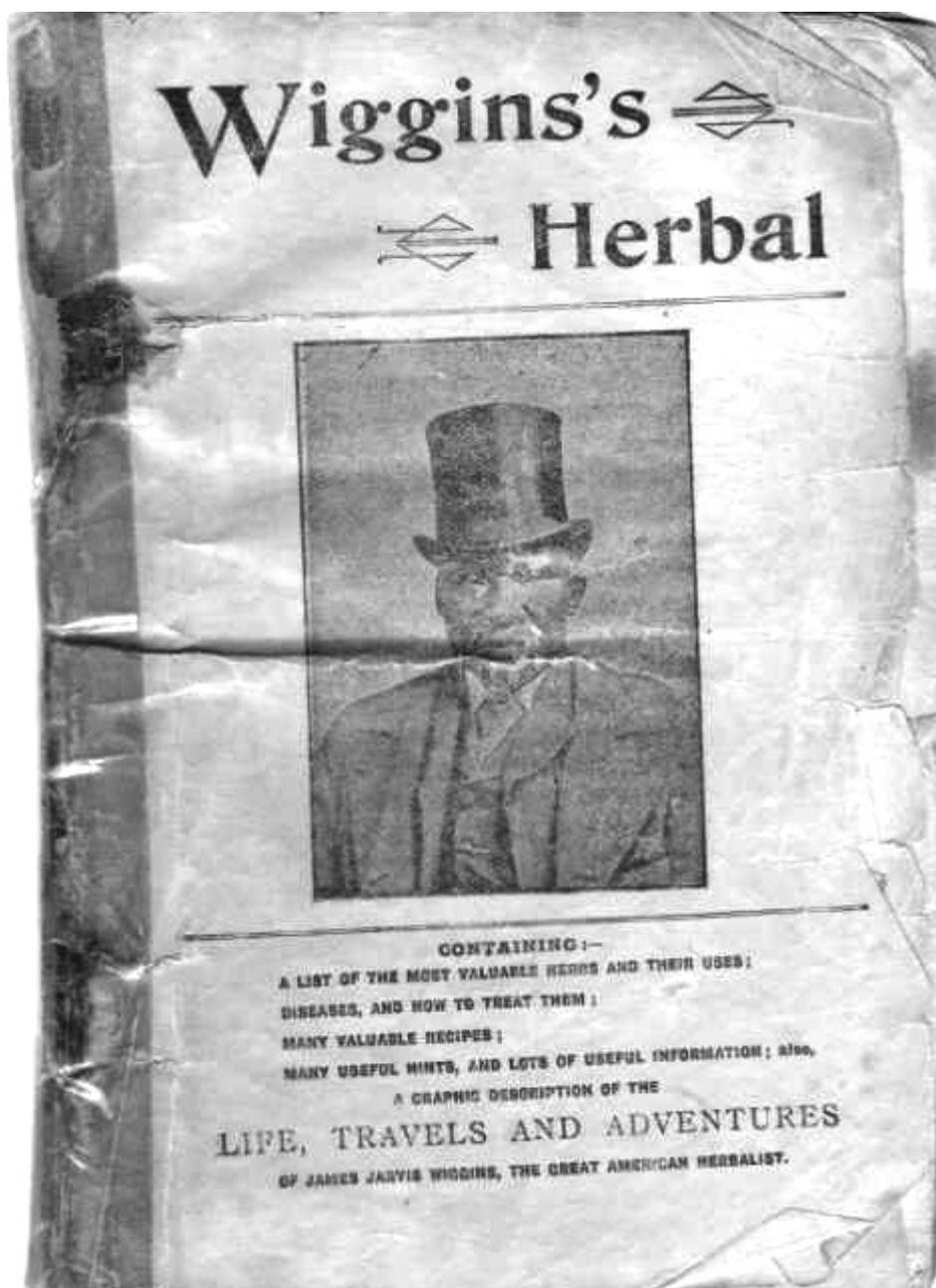
In September 1857, the Leigh Chronicle reported that 'On 13th inst at St George's Church, Tyldesley Mr Harold Anderson (a coloured gentleman), steward of the West India trading ship Johnstone' married Esther Longworth, the daughter of an oastler living in Charles Street.

By the time of the 1861 census, Harold and Esther had two sons – Julipson and Alfred. Presumably Harold was at sea, because his wife and children were living with her parents in Charles Street. The 27 year-old Esther was listed as a steam cotton weaver.

Another son, James Harold had been born by the time of the census of 1871. Esther and her sons were still living in Charles Street, and once again, Harold was absent, presumably pursuing his career as a ship's steward.

The 'coloured gentleman' was about 60 years old by 1881 and had given up the sea. He was living with his family in Alfred Street, Tyldesley and was listed as a colliery storekeeper. It is in this census that we learn that Harold Anderson was Jamaican by birth. Neither Julipson nor Alfred had married and both were living with their parents. Young James was still at school.

When Harold Anderson died in May 1882, the family posted death notices in both local newspapers. The Leigh Journal also carried a short piece headed 'Death of a Man of Colour', observing that the 'deceased



A booklet entitled 'Wiggins's Herbal, containing a graphical description of the life, travels and adventures of James Jarvis Wiggins, the Great American Herbalist', 1890s

had had a somewhat adventurous life', unfortunately without elaborating. There were several hundred spectators at this black resident's funeral at St George's Church in Tyldesley, where he had married Esther Longworth twenty-five years before.

Of Harold's sons, Julipson died in 1893, but Alfred went on to marry Lucy Mann in Tyldesley in 1901. The census of 1911 reveals that the couple had at least four children.

Harold Anderson's youngest son James achieved local fame as a part-time entertainer in the Tyldesley and

Atherton areas (his day job was at Burton's Mill in Factory Street Tyldesley). The local press covered the performances of the 'coloured vocalist and humorist' quite extensively, and were particularly impressed by his ventriloquist act, in which he used two dummies. Both papers covered 20 year-old James Anderson's death and funeral in October 1890. Anderson had been a member of the locally based Ohio Minstrel troupe. These minstrel acts were popular in Victorian England. Unusually, this one had contained a black man.

Earlier that year, James Anderson had been a witness at the wedding of another local black resident, Magor (or Major) Stewart who had been born in North Carolina. This African American worked in the shop of yet another black man, Benjamin Wiggins, a herbalist of Queen Street in Leigh.

Wiggins, who was known as James Jarvis Wiggins professionally, appears to have been born in Virginia, USA in about 1840. He emigrated to England when free to do so, perhaps after the defeat of the slave-owning south in the American Civil War. By the time he married Emma Daniels at Prescot Register Office in 1882, he was a widower living in St Helens. Emma had also been widowed, her first husband having been a Caribbean-born slater.

At some time in the 1880s, Wiggins moved to Leigh and opened a herbalist's shop at 5 Queen Street, which was then technically part of Atherton. In 1890 his assistant Major Stewart married Wiggins's dual heritage step-daughter Emma at St Joseph's Catholic Church in Bedford. The occasion was considered to be sufficiently exotic for the Leigh Journal to include a piece headed 'Coloured Wedding at Leigh', in which 'the couple both belong to the coloured race'. It was at this wedding that Harold Anderson's son James was a witness.

At the time of the 1891 census, Wiggins, his wife and the newlyweds



Group photograph with man thought to be Benjamin (James Jarvis) Wiggins at bottom, Nineteenth Century

were all living above the shop in Queen Street. Wiggins was listed as a 'medical botanist' in the Kelly's Directory of 1895.

He found time in the 1890s to write a booklet entitled 'Wiggins's Herbal, containing a graphical description of the life, travels and adventures of James Jarvis Wiggins, the Great American Herbalist'.

The African-American was sufficiently well known to merit a news story in the Leigh Journal in August 1895. The roadway and pavement at Queen Street were being re-laid. The Journal related that Wiggins had provided refreshments for the thirsty workmen. The latter 'determined, when the work was finished, to show their appreciation of his generosity by an opening ceremony of a novel character. Accordingly on Saturday, a trap secured from Mrs Kay and Sons' establishment was drawn through the street by workmen preceded by a trumpeter. In the conveyance was the hero of the occasion, and the coloured gentleman evidently enjoyed the situation, bowing and saluting to the persons who had assembled to see the fun. After the trap came a number of paviers with their implements and banners, and after a speech by Mr Wiggins, who declared the route reopened, the proceedings terminated'.

Sometime in the late 1890s, Wiggins and Emma left Leigh for Ashton in Makerfield, where they opened a new herbalist's establishment on Bolton Road. Emma died in early 1900 and was buried at St Helens in the grave of her first husband, the West Indian slater George Daniels. Wiggins survived his wife for less than twelve months.

I have little doubt that there were other black residents in the Leigh area in the Victorian period. For example, Laurena Gough, married to a baker in Brown Street in Leigh, was involved in a violent dispute with a neighbour in 1870. The Leigh Chronicle described her as 'a coloured woman'. However, like most working people at the time, Laurena would have remained anonymous had she not temporarily stepped outside her mundane and unremarkable life and attracted the attention of the local press.

NB Should the reader wish to discover more about James Jarvis Wiggins, his wife Emma, his step daughter Emma and Major (or Magor) Stewart, there was substantial correspondence about them on the Who Do You Think You Are? website a few years ago.

THE MINERS, PIT BROW LASSES AND WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

BY YVONNE ECKERSLEY

In 1866, 1886, 1887 and in 1911 a powerful Miners' Union sought legislation to prevent seemingly powerless women working on pit brows.

1859-1866

In December 1859, seventeen years after women had been prevented from working underground, the National Miners' Union formulated a resolution, compiled a petition requesting legislation to prohibit females working on the pit brow and presented it to Parliament. Another resolution and petition was instigated at the 1863 Leeds Miners' Conference and yet another in November 1865 in Newcastle.

On the 15 February 1866 a Select Committee on Mines was established to look into the 'complaints contained in Petitions

from the Miners of Great Britain presented to the House during the last session'. To justify the proposed exclusion the miners unions argued: that the work was degrading the women; it reduced their capacity to become good wives and mothers; it was too arduous; their proximity to miners and their clothing was immoral and indecent.

The Select Committee used these arguments as criteria in their investigations. The 1867 Final Report of the Committee stated that 'allegations of either indecency or immorality were not established' and 'the employment of women on pit banks does not require legislative prohibition or interference'.

The miners' attack had relied on rhetoric surrounding an idealised role for women, and on the belief that they had considerably

more power in the mining community and in Parliament than they actually had.

The Miners did have powerful friends in Parliament. In Wigan the main opponent of the pit brow women was the miners' leader, William Pickard. Another was Pickard's business partner John Lancaster, a large colliery owner, Wigan MP and fellow abolitionist. The Scottish miners' leader, Alexander McDonald, claimed there were 100 MPs ready and willing to cooperate in addressing all the miners complaints.

On the face of it, particularly as they formed only 7 per cent of Wigan's mining workforce – 400-500 in 1866 – it does seem the women were powerless to prevent their removal. However, they were not passive victims and they had champions, not least among them were ordinary miners. Just one week after the 1859 Miners' petition, a Scholes miner wrote to the Wigan Observer asking, 'What is to become of these poor creatures? Are they by an Act of Parliament, to be cast on the streets to become common prostitutes? For I can see no other means that they will have of obtaining a livelihood'.

Whilst individual Wigan miners denied that Pickard and his union spoke for them, one champion, Mr Gilroy, manager of Ince Hall



Emblems carried by the Pit Brow Women at the NUWSS Pageant of Trades and Professions in 1909 (by permission of The Women's Library, LSE Library)

Coal and Cannel Company, harnessed newly developed technology to help. He sent all his pit girls, early in 1866, to be photographed by Coopers of Wigan in their Sunday best. In London he presented the Committee with Cooper's finished albums, using the images to contradict the Miners' claims.

Arthur Munby, friend, photographer and publicist of the Wigan pit girls, wrote to the Committee drawing their attention to how many of the pit women were supporting, or helping to support families. This was a very opportune line of defence, given that the Home Secretary would have been very well aware of the poverty in Lancashire caused by the cotton famine.

At least one local women of influence defended her poorer sisters. Helen Biggs Taylor, a strong independent woman and a pioneer of the early women's suffrage movement, accompanied a deputation of Wigan pit brow women to London. There the twenty pit brow women, carefully dressed in their working trousers with aprons turned up and pit bonnets on their heads, met the Home Secretary. In this rather novel and dramatic way they gave the Home Secretary opportunity to evaluate the pit women face to face.

Helen Taylor's suffragism led her to canvass for the re-election in Westminster of John Stuart Mill in 1868. In 1866 Mill had introduced the first women's suffrage petition in Parliament. She counted among her friends Lydia Becker, who in 1867, founded the Manchester National Society for Women's Suffrage. Women's suffrage was a live issue in Wigan around this time. In 1868, 262 of Wigan's women ratepayers signed the Manchester National Society petition which gave credence to Jacob Bright's 1869 amendment, and gave them the right to vote in Council Elections. The Wigan Branch of the Manchester

National Women's Suffrage Society was founded in 1870.

Helen Biggs Taylor lived in Standish, was married to Thomas Taylor, owner of cotton mills in Wigan, donor to and builder of Wigan's first public library (now the Museum of Wigan Life) and Wigan's Mayor in 1854.

1866

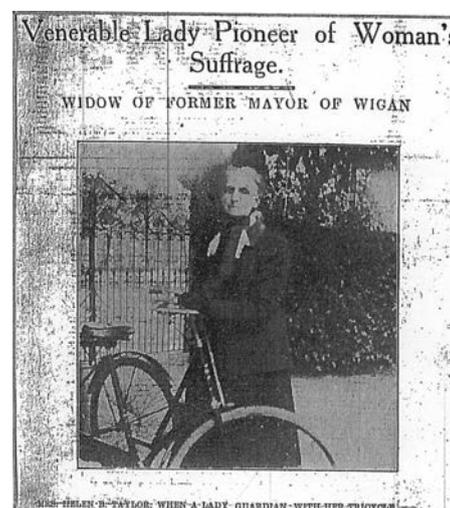
Twenty years later the Miners tried again. In February 1886, a motion to amend the Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1872 was introduced to Parliament. Immediately, pit women of the Wigan and St Helen's areas enlisted the help of local community leaders to organise a campaign to save their jobs.

From February a number of large meetings in support of the pit brow women were held, usually led by clergymen, and supported by local coal owners, politicians and rank and file miners. Reverend George Fox chaired the first, called by the pit brow women, at Bryn. Then in March at Lamberhead Green, Reverend Harry Mitchell and Mrs Park committed themselves unreservedly to defend the women's right to work at the pit head. The campaign had begun.

Meetings were held at Goose Green, St Helen's Town Hall and Westleigh where defensive resolutions and petitions were formulated. In this instance the miners' attempt came to an untimely end. The government fell, a general election was called and a new legislature began in July, with Henry Matthews the new Home Secretary.

1887

In January 1887, another Coal Mines Regulation Act Amendment Bill began its progress through Parliament. When in May, the miners' amendment was presented again,



Wigan Mayoress Margaret Park, who took a group of 23 Pit Brow Women to the House of Commons in 1887

the political climate was very different. Walter McLaren wrote to The Times drawing public attention to the injustice of the miners' actions and called for help. The issues surrounding the pit brow women's situation attracted the support of political, employment, trade union, personal rights and women's suffrage groups nationwide.

Individuals such as Arthur Munby wrote repeatedly to Henry Matthews. The committee of the Employment of Women Society, and the Southport Women's Liberal Association among others, compiled and sent supportive petitions to the Home Office. Significantly, the Central Committee for Women's Suffrage sent Matthews a memorial declaring it was, 'unjust for a Parliament, in the election of which women have not votes, to interfere with the rights of women to work'.

Other individuals and societies proactive in the campaign included Lydia Becker, who had visited the Pemberton pit brow women in 1886. She accompanied the 17 May, Pit Brow Women's Deputation to the Home Secretary, as did Mrs McLaren, wife of Walter McLaren, the MP who instigated the deputation. Mrs McLaren was also on the Committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage.



Helen Biggs Taylor, pictured in 1901

The Girls Friendly Society pledged support, with the Countess of Lathom, President of the Liverpool branch, speaking in their defence, as did Millicent Fawcett of the National Society for Women's Suffrage.

Support was given by the National Defence of Personal Rights, the National Vigilance Association, the Girls Friendly Society and the British Women's Temperance Society. Mrs Park was president of its Wigan branch and was the leader of Wigan's White Cross Army for the Protection of Young Girls. It was the National Vigilance Association who organised the pit women's London accommodation. They stayed and were entertained, without cost, at their Girls Club and Home in Greek Street.

The Wigan women were met at Euston and marched in twos through London to the Home Office behind Arthur Munby and Pemberton pit girl Elizabeth Halliwell. Only the six Blundell pit girls wore their pit clothes. Margaret Park, Mrs Burrows from Atherton and Reverend Mitchell marched with them. Interestingly a third of the 99 people accompanying the deputation to the Home Secretary were feminists.

In the end, they were the victors. The Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1887 only restricted women from moving railway wagons.

1909

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After 1887, pit brow women continued to be visible within the women's suffrage movement. In 1909, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Society hosted a Conference of the International Women's Suffrage Association. As part of the opening ceremony, a Pageant of Women's Trades and Professions procession walked from Euston to the Royal Albert Hall. Wigan's pit brow had their place among these 1000 female workers. Wearing their pit clothes, they entered the Hall in procession, behind the emblems of their trade, flanked by lanterns. The editors of the women's suffrage journal, 'The Common Cause', labelled them 'one of the favourites in the procession'.

1911

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On 2 August 1911, Sir Arthur Markham, at Robert Smillie's suggestion, introduced an amendment to another Coal Mines Bill which would limit female employment at collieries to cleaning or office work. Smillie was a member of the Royal Commission into Coal mining, and a leader of the Miners' Federation. The motion was carried and supporters of the pit brow women's right to work were galvanised into action.

A 2000 strong meeting was held at Wigan's skating rink. Eliza Neal of Westleigh moved a resolution and asked local MPs to help. Three petitions were signed at collieries and the next day a deputation of 47 pit brow women from the Wigan area, travelled to London to meet the Home Secretary, Charles Masterman.

For Masterman and government, after the issue of whether the

work was suitable, a second issue of concern was the injustice perpetrated by the miners to female pit brow workers and a third, whether Parliament had the right to legislate in favour of one group at the expense of another.

Mastermen concurred with Sam Woods and Stephen Walsh. As the women were barred from membership of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain they had no voice in forming the amendment, therefore the miners had no right to deny them their choice of work. The Miners' union refused to admit women until after the First World War; in Wigan, the Women's Trade Union League and the Federation of Women Workers' organiser, Helen Silcock, were working to provide an alternative union base for the pit women.

Going further he echoed the women's suffrage societies' viewpoints, that 'a male Parliament selected by men had no right to prevent that occupation'. The women's suffrage movement was at its height and its arguments influenced many, including Masterman. He told the deputation that the arguments he had heard in the Committee were proof of the need of the franchise for women and he promised to work for the amendment's deletion.

However, as something more definite was needed the agitation continued. On 3 October the Lancashire and Cheshire Women's Textile and Other Workers Representation Committee, the National Professional and Industrial Society and the Manchester and Salford Women's Trade and Labour Council, organised a protest meeting in Manchester's Albert Hall. Eighty pit women were on the platform. There, speakers linked the pit brow women's protest with need for the enfranchisement of working women.

By 11 October they were raising money for their 'Great Protest Meeting' in London's Memorial Hall. On the 31 October, with Sam Woods, Wigan's Mayor, they took a deputation, this time from all the districts employing women to this large protest meeting. Carefully dressed in clogs, print dresses with white aprons, neat shawls and coal scuttle bonnets they presented the 'respectable' face of women pit workers.

The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) sent Annie Kenney to Wigan. The WSPU began by distributing a leaflet which supported the second and third of the main issues - 'We claim the right to sell our labour, even as our brothers', and, 'working women need the vote to protect themselves in the industrial world'.

On 18 October, with their flair for spectacle they organised a rousing cross party mass meeting. Watched by 'multitudes' of supportive pit brow women, twenty-two women representing their colleagues in district pits, gave personal testimonies to counteract both Smillie's assertion that the opposition was a 'bogus agitation got up by the mine

owners', and to demolish the social, moral and protective arguments as to why women should be deprived of their livelihood.

At the same time the Wigan Branch of the National Union of Women Suffrage Societies organised a large suffrage meeting, described as 'enthusiastic', at Ince Public Hall, led by Lady Balfour. As with the earlier campaigns, the pattern of condemnation, resolutions,

petitions and deputations, for and against, to the Home Secretary, led to the same outcome. The miners' amendment was defeated.

References:
Wigan Observer and District Advertiser; Manchester Archives Women's Suffrage Collection, including 'The Common Cause'; Hansard; Angela John, 'The Sweat of their Brow'

Rebel women - the fight for suffrage in Wigan and beyond!

Join the Museum of Wigan Life in commemorating the centenary of women over the age of 30 voting for the first time!

A full itinerary of speakers has been scheduled for this day and special guest speaker Helen Pankhurst. Helen is the granddaughter of Sylvia Pankhurst, one of the leaders of the suffrage movement.

Talks will also focus on the history of suffrage in the Wigan Borough, Lancashire, and will feature film showings by Dr Ali Ronan.

Speakers confirmed are:

Yvonne Eckersley – 50 years of women's suffrage in the Wigan Borough 1868-1918

Marianne Howell – 'No persons here - only women'

Dr Ali Ronan – 'These Dangerous Women' – Introduction and film

Helen Pankhurst – talk and book signing

Tickets cost £12 for people from the Wigan Borough and £15 for outside. Lunch is included.

Places are limited so please book now!

Thursday 22 November 2018 – Museum of Wigan Life
 10am – 5.30pm

For more information or to book please contact the Museum of Wigan Life on 01942 828128 or email wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk



By kind permission of the "Manchester Guardian."
DEPUTATION OF PIT BROW WOMEN.
 A deputation of Pit Brow women from Lancashire went up to London last week under the leadership of the Mayor and Aldermen of Wigan to protest against the amendment to the Home Bill, prohibiting the employment of other women in the future, in the same work.

*The Common Cause, 10 August 1911
 (by permission of Archives+, Manchester)*

BY BARBARA BARCLAY

TALES OF CLOGGER JACK

Barbara Barclay shares the work of her late husband, John Barclay, the Lancashire dialect poet

Clogger Jack

Day's leet is fast fadin' t' neet,
an yon stove's warmin' glow
is polishin' leather to a shine
finished clogs 'll never know.

It's leet strikes back from knife
an' awl,
an other tools o't' trade,
while reawnd yon waws greight
shaddos mek
a myst'ry eawt o't' shade.

Two figures sit areawnd yon stove
their shaddos climin' waws.
Owd Jack's well built,
his showders broad,
an' t' lad's nown not welly taw.

Thowd face were carved through
years long gone.
His life were passin' through,
an in it' passage skills of hond,
wit th een, wi' t' fulness grew.

His hair is grey; his honds
were strong
fro' mekin' clogs an shoon.
One hond keeps plate upon
his knee,
an t'other's busy wi' t'spoon.

His brew can sits on top o't' stove;
its leet sparks from his een.
Across yon can he looks at lad,
an' tells him what has bin.

Some tales are glad, an' some
are sad
yet aw he tells is true.
Lad listens hunched upon his bench;
it beats what's towd at skoo.

Chap wipes his 'tash, his honds
tek up
his work just lately shed.
Deft fingers pick up wax an' strands

t' twist a tachin' thread.
While those fingers were
twistin' t' thread
he spins his thowts fo't' lad,
an' tells o' reets t' men denied
i't' days when times were bad.

He fills his pipe, an cleawds o' smoke
fill th' air abeawt his stool,
an circles reawnd yon lad's
fresh face
uncut bi life's sharp tool.

Lad's een is on yon sculptured face
cut deep wi' passin' time,
so t' bucket uv lad's innocence
is filled bi tale an' rhyme.

Thoose tales aw tell of a justice
each con claim as his own.
Heaw each should know a dignity,
but some hev never known.

He show t' lad awt' ways o' men.
Their goodness an' their greed.
Heaw men's hunger needs moor
than bread;
on ideals they mun feed.

Th' owd clock t' soon reminds
that time
has come t' shut up shop.
Chap deawns his tools, lad picks
up books,
an' tales this neet mun stop.

An in thoose words owd mon
did give
a faith fo' livin by.
That dignity an' justice man
t' man should not deny.

I' time owd Jack laid deawn his life;
he'd had his given span,
cos he were a Ceawnciler,
they praised him to a man.

And so his life were laid to rest
with pomp and circumstance.

The Ceawncil Chamber mourned it's
loss wi words of eloquence.

Awtho' eawr words aren't fine
an' grand,
an' showy speech wi lack,
yet we th' ordinary folk
hev lost eawr 'Clogger Jack'.

Wedded Bliss

Jem he were a travellin' mon,
cobblin' were his trade.
Fro' blegburn deawn t' Warrinton
folk wore the shoon he made.

Neaw Jem he were a happy mon;
a smile fixed on his face,
so Jack were alus glad, when Jem
showed up an' tuk his place.

This time Jem's face were aw
deawncast;
his look were glum an' sad.
In fact he weren't a happy chap
he looked like times were bad.

Neaw Jack were puzzled bi'
this look;
he wondered what were wrong.
He axsed owd Jem what
were t' matter,
an' why he weren't on song.

"Jack tha con see I'm gettin' on,
an work will soon bi' gone.
Neaw when it is what con I do,
when aw the work is done?"

"Is that aw that's worritin' thi,
when work fo' thee is o'er.
Thas brass enco t' sit bi' fire,
sup pints o' ale, an' snore"

"Jack when travellin' days is done
I'll hev little comfort,
when Owdham, Bowton,
Preston teawn
howd wives in every port"

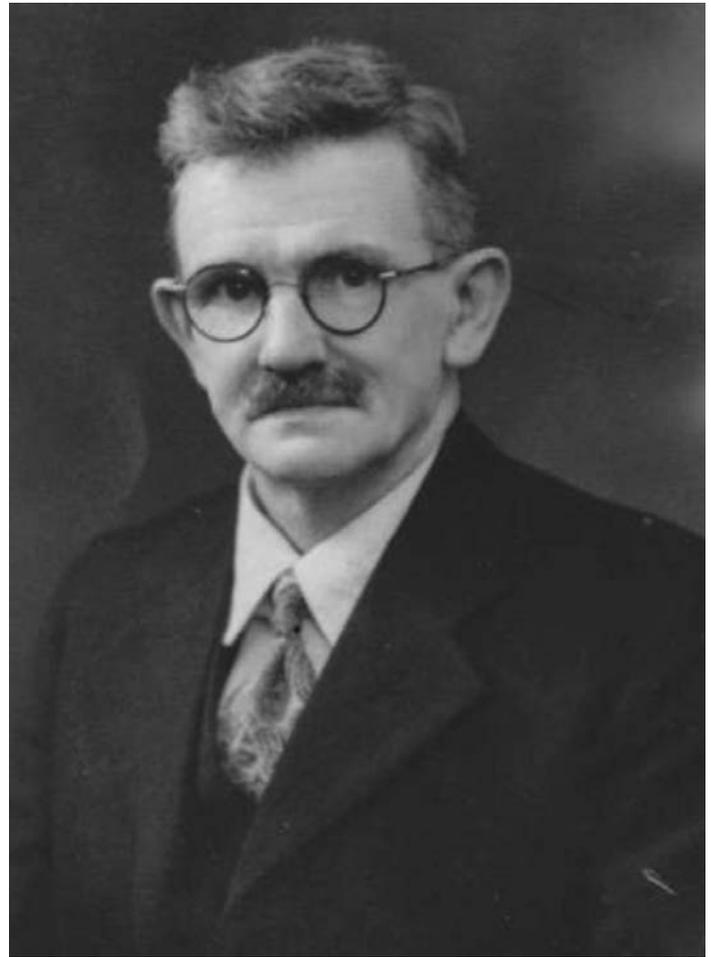
Granddad John William Turner

Granddad Turner was a clogger and boot repairer with a small shop just outside Wigan. He and Grandma (nee Alice Fitton) lived not very far away in the family home where my aunts and uncle also lived. Grandma would cook his dinner and as a young boy I would take it to Granddad at his shop.

In his spare time he was a Special Constable. As I grew older he would talk to me about his beliefs in justice for all and the sharing of the Nation's wealth. He was a staunch Labour member and Councillor for 23 years (from 1943) but he was not partisan. He served on many committees and represented the old Pemberton North Ward. He championed his constituents and cared for the drop-outs and the oppressed. He was a very fair man well able to castigate and route out any form of corruption.

On one occasion I asked why had he never stood for Mayor. He looked straight across the bench, fixed me with his eye, and said "to be Mayor John, you have to do favours". The nearest he came to that honour was to be Deputy Mayor in 1956-57. His constituency surgery was his clogging shop, not only dealing with shoes to be mended but with injustice to be righted. He was one of the town's last remaining clog makers.

He died on 3rd March 1973 - See Obituaries.



Councillor John William Turner

**FORMER DEPUTY-MAYOR
MR J. W. TURNER DIES**
A FORMER Wigan councillor and deputy-mayor has died in hospital, aged 88.
Mr. John William Turner — one of the town's last remaining clogmakers — had been ill for some time.
He joined the council in 1943 and served for 23 years representing the old Pemberton North ward for Labour.
Mr. Turner, of Eleanor-street, Wigan, was deputy-mayor in 1956-57. He served on various committees, and was a special constable in his spare time.
The funeral takes place at the Church of Christ, Wigan, on Thursday, The Mayor, Coun. Mrs. Ethel Naylor will attend.

TURNER — In hospital, on March 3rd, 1973, in his 89th year.
JOHN WILLIAM
of 5, Eleanor-street, Wigan (former Deputy Mayor of Wigan), dear husband of the late Alice and dearly loved father of Lily, Helena, Ernest and Alice and a very dear granddad and great granddad. Funeral service on Thursday, March 8th, at 11 a.m. at the Church of Christ, Newtown, followed by committal at Wigan Crematorium.
— Inquiries: Brogan Funeral Service, 30, Karl-street, Wigan. Tel. Wigan 41644; after hours: Standish 3578.

Newspaper reports of the death of Councillor John William Turner

Little Hommer

Joe he wer' a time served cobbler
a Lanky mon an'free.
Fro Sawthpoort up t' Staley Bridge
a settled mon were he.

He lit one day i' Wiggin Teawn
t' Jack's shop he did mek.
A job at bench were aw he axsed
A bench were Joe's t' tek.

Bi day his work were sure an' true,
an' Jack had nowt t' fawt.

Each neet, when t' tools were aw
laid deawn
owd Joe had earned his sawt.

Joe tuk each neet his lttle hommer
whoam t' his lodging place.
While Jack did wonder oft and long
at smile on Joe's owd face.

One neet, when t' shop were
being shut,
Jack axsed a word o' Joe.
Why tek a little hommer whoam?
Jack were powfogged t' know.

Owd Joe towd Jack a won'rous tale
O' lodgin's neat an' trim
i't Hallgate, bi All Saints Tavern
Jack knew yon spot from him.
Neaw of a neet deawn in yon Tavern
he sup a pint of ale,
but suppin' ale were spoilt bi feights,
wheer chaps fowt tuth an' nail.

"Jack tha con see, as clear as day,
feights shouldna stop a sup,
then bi gum mi little hommer
comes hondy int bust up"

SEARCHING FOR SUFFRAGISTS

BY HANNAH TURNER

Mary and Dave Halliwell drew attention to the suffragist Florence Hindshaw in their excellent Leigh Life article. Until now Wigan Archives and Leigh Local Studies have found little on the person who is believed to be the first Honorary Secretary of the Leigh Branch of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. However, thanks to the new Leigh Grammar School Heritage project, records have been revealed concerning Leigh's mysterious suffragist.

Florence was born and raised in Salford by her mother Elizabeth Pye and her father William Hindshaw. Both Elizabeth and William were teachers. William was a widower and father to at least five children when he married Elizabeth who was 20 years his junior. They only had one child together which was Florence. William died when Florence was only ten years old.

Despite her early loss, Florence excelled and attended Owens College in Manchester. This would have been around the same time that Christabel Pankhurst attended the college, co-founder of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). Although there is no evidence that they knew each other, Florence did know another prominent WSPU member, Dora Marsden. Dora boarded with Florence and her mother in 1901 whilst at Owens. Dora was known for her radical voice and outspoken views on marriage and free love. She had a feisty disposition and her actions during her WSPU membership included being arrested, going on hunger strike and heckling

Surname <i>Hindshaw</i> Christian Names <i>Florence Pye</i> Style <i>Miss</i>			
1. Date of Birth. <i>Aug 2nd 1899</i>	2. Date of appointment on probation. —	3. Date of definitive appointment. <i>Sept 9th 1908</i>	4. Date of leaving. <i>July, 1912.</i>
5. Schools and Colleges at which educated, with dates. State names and types of institutions. <i>Pendleton Grammar School 1890-92 Pendleton High School for Girls 1892-96 Salford Pupil Teachers Centre 1896-99 The Owens College - 1899-1902 (Manchester University)</i>		6. Particulars of Public and University Examinations taken, and certificates and degrees obtained, with dates. <i>1st Class Queen's Scholarship Examⁿ 1898. Ordinary B.A. degree. Manchester University 1902</i>	
7. List of teaching posts held, with dates. <i>Bowker St Mixed Elementary School Salford 1902-1903 Victoria Grammar School Ulverston 1903-1908</i>		8. Particulars of training in teaching, if any, and certificates or diplomas obtained, with dates. <i>Manchester Day Training Dept 1899-02 Government Teachers Certificate 1901</i>	
10. Special subject or subjects. <i>English History</i>		9. State external teaching or official work undertaken, if any, in addition to duties in the School. —	
11. State principal duties assigned, and subjects taken. (Any subsequent changes and their dates to be indicated in red ink.) <i>General supervision of the girls - Responsible for their discipline & games Sep. 1910. Subjects: History in seven forms some English & French</i>		13. Particulars of retiring allowance, if any. —	
12. Total annual emoluments. <i>Salary, with scale, if any. £160 rising by £10 a year to £220 according to the Lancashire County Council Capitation Fees, if any. Estimated value of board and lodging if given as part of emoluments.</i>		14. Post, if any, taken up after leaving the School. <i>English mistress, Wigan Girls' High School.</i>	

Florence's record from Leigh Grammar LGS

Winston Churchill. Dora broke away from the WSPU and became a radical voice in feminism and founder of several feminist magazines.

Whether Dora's radical stance or the WSPU's militant actions did have an impact on Florence it is hard to tell. In the decade that followed, which

saw the WSPU's activism and militancy escalate, Florence is recorded as graduating from Owens College, gaining her First Class Teachers Certificate and then teaching at schools in both Salford and Ulverston. In 1908 Florence was appointed Senior Mistress at Leigh Grammar School.

Leigh Grammar School

Florence's duties at Leigh included teaching History, English and French as well as the general supervision and discipline of the girls. Although there is little evidence of Florence's day-to-day school life, it is interesting to note that shortly after Florence's arrival, the debating society divided itself into two sections for girls and boys. Topics to be discussed included 'Should women be Mayors?' and 'Should women have the vote?'. Just a few years before, the Old Girls' Debating Society were arguing whether girls should receive domestic training or not.

It is also intriguing that during Florence's tenure the school held its own General Election. This was not uncommon but at this particular election there was for the first time a 'Suffragette' candidate. Three pupils put themselves forward as candidates. There was a Liberal, Mr Williams, and a Conservative, Mr Hayward, and for the first time the Suffragette candidate, a Miss M Smith.

On the day of the candidates' debate it is reported that the audience 'anxiously awaited' the appearance of Miss Smith as they 'had heard that she was of that noble band of militant suffragettes'. The LGS magazine reported that luckily there were no disturbances and 'Mr Williams, unlike the unfortunate Mr Birrell, was able to speak on two legs'. The Mr Birrell they are referring to could possibly be the Liberal MP Augustine Birrell who in November of that same year had allegedly been set upon by a group of twenty suffragettes and on trying to escape had twisted his knee.

Around the same time the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) met in Leigh. In September 1910 they held a meeting on Leigh Market Place where they assured the crowd that unlike the WSPU, the NUWSS favoured peaceful and non-militant methods of gaining the vote. The society had been to Leigh at least once before and had gathered the signatures of 2843 Leigh men to support women's suffrage.

Within three months of this meeting a Leigh branch of the NUWSS had been formed in the British School, their



*Laying of the foundation stone at Wigan Girls High School, 1914.
Is Florence in the crowd?*

objective being to obtain the parliamentary franchise for women on the same terms as men.

Florence is believed to have been the first honorary secretary; tasks as honorary secretary included writing to both Leigh Parliamentary candidates during the 1910 election for support, and petitioning Leigh Municipal Borough Council for advocacy. Within a year the branch had hosted four meetings, had over 80 members, and had invited a number of speakers including the first female Manchester City Councillor, Margaret Ashton. At one meeting C P Scott, editor of the Manchester Guardian and former Leigh MP, chaired and introduced the proceedings.

The society also embraced social events and in December 1911 Florence appears to be contributing to a musical programme in the Co-operative Society's Rooms. Indeed it seems Florence had a fondness for culture as her name appears in the editorials of Leigh Literary Society, with appearances in their choir and on at least one occasion delivering a lecture 'on life in Elizabethan England'.

Wigan Girls High School

Florence left Leigh in 1912 to teach English and Latin at the Wigan Girls High School. Why Florence left Leigh is unclear and it seems especially perplexing considering that her starting salary at Wigan would have been far less than her salary at Leigh. Whether Florence became involved in the Wigan Branch of the NUWSS after her move is also unclear.

Florence would later reminisce that she 'thoroughly enjoyed the fourteen years' at Wigan. Amongst her collections Florence kept a box of school photographs, one of which was labelled, 'The laying of the foundation stone of the new school in 1915'; the stone was to become the foundation for the school known today as Mab's Cross Primary.

During her time at Wigan, Florence volunteered to work at the local Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) hospital during the First World War. She also took a small leave of absence to gain her Masters only to take a permanent leave of absence a few years later when she married a market gardener, Frederick Butler Kirk in 1926.

Florence and Frederick settled in Cheshire. Florence remained a part of the Wigan Girls High School through the Wigan Old Girls.

Florence died on the 8 December in 1963. Despite having an active professional and social life in both Leigh and Wigan an obituary has yet to be found.

A big thank you to Julie McKiernan and the Leigh Grammar School Heritage Project as well as to Laura Makin and Yvonne Eckersley.

Bibliography

Leigh Grammar School Collection; Wigan Girls High School Collection; Leigh Chronicle; Leigh Journal; Wigan Observer (Wigan Archives and Leigh Local Studies)

BY ADRIAN MORRIS

MURDER AND MAYHEM IN MEDIEVAL ABRAM

It was alleged that on 9 June 1321 'Henry de Abberam murdered Henry atte Gate at Abberham'. Two years later in the company of four others he was said to have 'feloniously killed Robert de Derwent'. Lesser crimes of which he was accused were taking away 'oxen belonging to John del Hill of Halywell' (1321), stealing 'cloth to the value of eight pounds from Henry Russel of Wigan' (1323) and 'goods to the value of 60s at Helegh' (1323).

This is quite an indictment on the character of the son of an important local landholder. To understand Henry's actions it is necessary to look at life in Lancashire at that time. Lawlessness was rife, and local gentry often turned to violence to solve their disputes. There was a system of law enforcement in place with the sheriff, who was appointed by the king, at its head, supported by one hundred bailiffs. The system was not successful because many of its administrators were skilful practitioners of bribery and extortion. In 1323 the situation was so bad that the king himself, Edward II, decided it would be to his advantage to travel north to rectify the situation. The Coram Rege Roll No. 254 is a record of the proceedings of a court held by the king in Wigan. The above charges were brought against Henry de Abberham at this time.

Within the county there was disharmony among the landed gentry. There were two main factions, the Hollands led by Robert de Holland and the Banastres with Adam Banastre at their head. Lesser gentry chose their favourites. The Abberhams sided with the Hollands. Longstanding differences led to armed conflict in 1315. The rapid advancement of the Hollands under the patronage of the powerful Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, caused Adam Banastre of Shevington, together with Henry de Lea and Sir William Bradshaw of Haigh and Blackrod, to begin a reign of terror in South Lancashire. Their forces murdered Henry de Bury, robbed the rector of Wigan's bailiff, took cattle from Norley, stole William Holland's sheep and took corn from the barn of Sir John de Langton at Newton. Eventually, they marched to the earl's castle at Liverpool with

the intention of taking it. They failed to do so but their journey was not entirely wasted as they extracted a ransom of ten pounds for sparing West Derby. In October the forces of the Hollands and Banastres met in a fierce battle at Deepdale near Preston. The Banastres were defeated in less than an hour. Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, was a powerful but unpopular figure at court. Finding himself unable to influence the king to the extent he desired, he began to lead the barons in an open revolt which eventually led to armed conflict culminating in Thomas's defeat by the king at the battle of Boroughbridge in 1322. He was executed soon afterwards at Pontefract Castle.

The fall of Thomas of Lancaster led to even more unrest in the county. Richard de Holland was said to have 'gathered to himself a great host of armed men on horse and on foot, and rode armed with his company through the country, sometimes to market towns, and to fairs and elsewhere in that county, in contravention of the king's peace and to the terror of the people.' Henry de Adburgham is one of ninety three people said to have sworn allegiance to him. William Bradshaw was actively involved in the ensuing mayhem. Among the many crimes of which he was accused in the Coram Rege Roll was the abduction of Richard de Abberham (Henry's father). A sum of twenty pounds was demanded for his release.

Occurrences of armed conflict between neighbours was not ended by the actions of Edward II but continued throughout the period. In 1419 Gilbert de Abram and his sons John and William were said to have forcibly entered the lands of Adam del Lache at Abram. This resulted in a proclamation forbidding armed men to roam the countryside 'to the peril of the king's peace'.

The complicated system of inheritance led to disputes as to who legally held a property. One of many examples occurred in the late fifteenth century when Gilbert Abram died and left his holdings to his two daughters, Constance, who

married Henry Byron, and Isabel, who married James Holt. On 17 March 1481 John Abraham is accused of having wrongly 'dessiesed' (dispossessed) Henry Byron, Constance his wife, James Holt and Isabel his wife of their feutenement in Abraham'. Presumably John Abraham was the male heir and disputed the inheritances of Gilbert's two daughters. The case was found in favour of the daughters and their husbands.

A violent incident occurred in nearby Ince in the late fifteenth century. The case of Thomas Gerard versus Sir Thomas Gerard and others was tried in the Duchy court in 1490/91. This case was important to the people in Abram because they paid for right of 'turbury' (the right to dig peat or turf from common moss lands to use as fuel) on the lands under dispute. In November 1490 Sir Thomas Gerard, knight 'caused 58 of his servants and tenants come to the said manor (Ince) and there with spades and shovels to cast up a ditch in the freehold and several grounds of the plaintiff (Thomas Gerrard) called Ince Moss otherwise Turnesshe Mosse, and by force expelled plaintiff from his old inheritance wherof he and his ancestors have been lawfully seised time without mynd.'

Sir Thomas appears to have been unrepentant because on 8 March 1491 his chaplain and others

'not fearing the King's laws in most riotous manner' again dug up the ditch, broke closes and drove away '17 kine and oxen with 1 horse'. Sir Thomas was still not satisfied and on 5 April brought 'grewhondes to bott both the tayles and eres of cattle and drove others into the mire and ditches'. Grewhondes are mastiffs.

When Gilbert Assheton of Bamfurlong Hall died, his son and heir John, was made ward to Roger Anderton of Bickershaw. In 1552 John, then aged fourteen, and a friend named John Shakerley, went to view his inheritance in Bamfurlong. However 'servants of Sir Thomas Gerrard, knight, at the command of the said Sir Thomas assembled at Bamfurlong and in the most riotous manner came up to the plaintiff and the said John, and with spiteful words commanded them in the name of Sir Thomas and upon pain of £40 to go away from the premises'. The boy was told to go to the house of Sir Thomas at Wyndleshae. John Shakerley assumed that this was a trap, thinking that if his friend came into the presence of the knight he would be taken prisoner. He urged the boy to take refuge in one of the rooms of the hall. Sir Thomas, on receiving a request for help in the capture, sent a further twelve of his servants. In the meanwhile John had escaped and went into hiding 'in secret places'.

LEIGH FOR ALL – HERITAGE OPEN DAY

Saturday
8 September
2018

10.30am-
3.00pm

Leigh For All takes place this year on Saturday 8 September on Leigh Civic Square, featuring a vintage car rally, Parish Church tours, heritage stalls, vintage bus tours, military heritage displays and brass band performances. For more information contact archives@wigan.gov.uk

Leigh Heritage Week Talks

To continue our celebration of local heritage, a programme of talks are planned for the week following Leigh For All

Tuesday 11 September, 7.00pm at Damhouse, Astley, 'The Three Lives of Damhouse', contact 01942 876417 for bookings, donations welcome.

Thursday 13 September, 7.00pm at St Peter's Church, Westleigh, '1868-1918 50 years of Women's suffrage in Leigh & Wigan', by Yvonne Eckersley, contact Margaret Molyneux, 07876425464, for more information.

By Thomas McGrath

A Loss to Atherton: The Life of Sarah Hesketh

Almost a century ago, the death of Miss Sarah Hesketh was reported as a 'loss to Atherton'. Although Miss Hesketh has largely been forgotten since, traces of her legacy are still visible in the town today.

The Hesketh Family

The Hesketh family were prominent residents of Atherton from the eighteenth century. Miss Hesketh's grandfather was Thomas Hesketh a fustian manufacturer and farmer at Gib Fold. Sadly Thomas died aged 34 and left his wife, Sarah, to raise their ten children. The family continued to thrive and Thomas's sons Edmund, William, Jonathan and George were all involved in the wholesale and retail grocery business in Atherton. Jonathan Hesketh was a corn merchant and had stores at the back of Market Street/ Mealhouse Lane known as 'Hesketh's Yard' and William Hesketh sat on Atherton's first town council.



*Prospect House, Atherton
(Source: Own Photograph, 2016)*

In October 1824 Edmund Hesketh married Mary Pearson (1797 - 1870) at St. Mary's Church in Leigh. Their first child, Thomas Pearson Hesketh, was born 4th September 1825 and a daughter, Sarah, named after both her grandmothers, followed on 1st November 1829. Their home, Prospect House, on Bolton New Road was built around the same time, to reflect the family's wealth and status. In some sources it is referred to as 'New Road House' or '32 Bolton New Road'.

Like his father, Edmund died young, aged 39, in 1833 and Mary was left with no income and two young children. Fortunately Mary was well-educated and she had been a teacher prior to her marriage. Mary's mother, Sarah Pearson, had also been a teacher and taught young ladies from her home at Molefields, Howebridge. To make ends meet, Mary established a school from her own home at Prospect House in 1834. By 1841 Prospect House was both family home and boarding school for young female scholars.

The school proved to be a success for Mary and her children both socially and financially. In the late 1840s Sarah joined her mother as a teacher. They went on to teach both sexes of all different social backgrounds. The children were taught in the three large

attic rooms of Prospect House which were well proportioned and had natural lighting. Mary and Sarah Hesketh were teaching children in a time before compulsory schooling. It was not until 1876 that every child had to go to school but only until the age of 8. In 1899 this was extended to the age of 12. The school at Prospect House also paved the way for future girls' schools in the locality. For example, the Holland sisters were educated by the Hesketh's and they in turn founded their own school at Hindsford House in the 1860s.

In 1864 there was a presentation in honour of Mary Hesketh, for her retirement after forty years of service. Her pupils, past and present, raised several thousand pounds, enough to present Mary Hesketh with a silver tea and coffee service. Among the celebrations, some of her former students wrote an acrostic poem for her which spelled out 'MRS HESKETH ATHERTON'.

In Slater's 1869 trade directory Mary Hesketh was recorded under the 'Gentry and Clergy' section. She never remarried despite being widowed at a young age. On 11 December 1870 she passed away at the age of 73.

Sarah Hesketh: The Teacher

Miss Hesketh, like her mother, was a renowned local teacher and she later taught in Atherton's public schools. It is recorded that she also taught Sunday School and practical subjects such as needlework.

In 1936, Robert Greenhalgh was 82 years old (born 1854) and he left a written record of his memories growing up in Atherton. This is what he remembered of the Hesketh family:



*Sarah Hesketh c. 1870s
(Source: Wigan Archives and
Leigh Local Studies)*



*First floor landing at Prospect House, Atherton.
(Source: Own Photograph, 2016)*

"I must not omit to mention a school that was conducted by Miss Hesketh in the house now used as the Atherton Estate Office. Miss Hesketh was more urbane and a gracious lady and one to whom many people in Atherton were greatly indebted for her many kindnesses. Her brother, who I as a lad used to regard as the most courteous gentleman that I had ever met, but he suffered I think from locomotor ataxia and he had many other troubles but Miss Hesketh gave him a home and comfort to the end."

Neither Sarah nor her brother Thomas ever married. For Miss Hesketh this gave her a degree of independence and freedom, particularly over her own money and property. Her married female contemporaries had no legal rights over their property until legislation changes in the 1870s and 1880s.

Sarah Hesketh: The Philanthropist

Miss Hesketh devoted her entire life to the people of Atherton and the legacy of her many philanthropic causes still exist today. She was secretary for the Atherton branch of the Girls Friendly Society, President of the Atherton Nursing Association, held an honorary rank in the Local Volunteer Corps and was a member of the Local Education Committee and the women's branch of the NSPCC. During the Lancashire Cotton Famine, which was a direct result of the American Civil War (1861-65), Sarah was part of a ladies

sewing group making clothes and household linen for the poor.

Miss Hesketh was particularly invested in the spiritual well-being of Atherton and donated money towards the building of St. George's Church, where she laid the foundation stone in 1911. She also donated money towards the building of St. Anne's in Hindsford and St. John the Baptist Atherton's Parish Church. In 1896 she paid £1000 towards a stained-glass window for St. John's.

Miss Hesketh also championed causes for ordinary people. She was instrumental in the construction of St. George's School and successfully influenced the all-male Local Education Committee to allow the pupils of the National School to play with footballs. On St. Stephen's Day she could often be found distributing money as part of Prescott's Charity in Atherton. Reverend Cameron speaking of Prospect House in 1919 said: "One would go into her home, for example, and find everything of the simplest and simple plainness of living and yet at the same time she was giving great sums to charity."

As well as her charity work, Miss Hesketh had a lifelong involvement in Athertonian society. In her youth she can be found on the guest list of various balls and civic functions and in her old age she often attended the weddings of her acquaintances. In 1896 she held a wedding reception at Prospect House for the 100 guests of Mr Alan Ramsey and Miss Jeanette Whittaker.

A Loss to Atherton

Sarah Hesketh died in 1919, just two months short of her 90th birthday. Reverend Cameron, speaking at her funeral referred to her passing as "a loss to Atherton" and noted that her final years were somewhat lonely as many of her contemporaries had already passed and she remained housebound after fracturing her leg during a fall in 1914. She had seen a great many changes in her lifetime; the reign of five monarchs, huge technological advances and inventions, the growth of women's rights and the development of Atherton into a large industrial town. Miss Hesketh spent the last five months of her life recovering

from an illness at Colwyn Bay and she was buried in the family grave at St. George's Church in Tyldesley but sadly no marker of the grave exists today.

Fortunately the people of Atherton decided to honour the memory of Sarah, and the first secondary school in the town was named 'Hesketh Fletcher' after her and the Fletcher family. The site of the original Hesketh Fletcher School is now sheltered accommodation, again paying homage to history, it is called Hesketh Manor.

Prospect House was purchased by Lord Lilford and was subsequently used as his Estate Office and Surveyor's Department. During the 1960s and 1970s the building was used as offices by Atherton Urban District Council. In the 1980s it became Atherton's Citizens Advice Bureau.

Prospect House was later used as a clinic specialising in arterial disease. It was then purchased by Mark Aldred, who uses the building as offices and a training space for the apprentices of his locksmith business. Over 180 years after Mary Hesketh established her school there, the building is once again being used for educational purposes. Mr Aldred has also named one of the former bedrooms 'The Hesketh Suite' in honour of the former residents. Therefore, in the same quiet, simple way she led her life, Miss Hesketh's legacy and her spirit still live on within the buildings of Atherton.



*Foundation stone at St. George's Church, Atherton. 'This stone was laid by Sarah Hesketh. October 14th 1911'
(Source: Own Photograph, 2016)*

ROYAL COURT THEATRE

BY JESS ROTHERHAM, THE OLD COURTS

Wigan Entertainments.



1. THE PAVILION. 2. COURT THEATRE.
3. THE HIPPODROME.

Wigan Theatres and Cinemas, 1911

A couple of weeks ago, the people behind The Old Courts managed to secure the purchase of the former Royal Court Theatre on King Street in Wigan (known in recent years as nightclub Springbok/The Hub) with plans to restore this Grade II listed, former 3000 seat theatre back to its intended use for the community it was built for.

The theatre, which is still largely intact, will form part of The Old Courts' aim to develop heritage spaces and to support the development of arts and culture in Wigan Borough. We are very excited that the mid-range theatre space will once again be accessible to the people of Wigan Borough and beyond, and we passionately believe that breathing new life into

this historic space will be of huge benefit to our town.

We've got a big job on our hands as we intend to restore this beautiful building back to its former glory, however it's a job we're happy to undertake. Wigan is a great place with great people so the sky's the limit for our town!

We've had an overwhelming response on Facebook, a lot of people in Greater Manchester are excited about what is to come! The Royal Court Theatre brings back nostalgic memories for many. It opened in 1886 and ended its life as a theatre/cinema in 1974. People have been sharing their memories of visiting the cinema with loved ones, which films they have watched there, how the sweet shop on the corner used to look... and we have been inundated with messages from people wanting to help us restore this beautiful building. We are definitely feeling the support of our community.

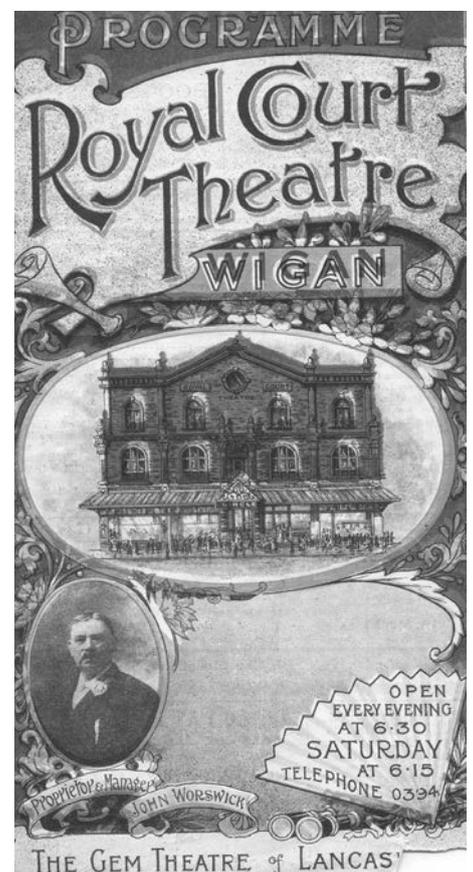
Who are we? The Old Courts is a not for profit multi-arts centre which aims to bring innovative art, music, comedy, dance and spoken word events to Wigan and the surrounding areas. All year round we have a packed calendar of live music gigs, various children's shows and interactive activities, visual art exhibitions, touring and local theatre events, comedy and a whole lot more.

What makes us different? As a not for profit, all revenue from ticket sales, refreshments, venue hire and supporter donations are invested into making great events and creating opportunities for people to be part of a cultural revolution. We embrace the constant, thriving cultural scenes we all see when we visit towns and cities around the

UK and The Old Courts believe that this buzz and positivity is happening here in Wigan with you on board. We are run by a small team of local creatives who believe that cutting edge art isn't a thing of privilege reserved for the chosen few, we all have a right to express ourselves and we firmly believe that anything is possible with the right ideas. We will soon be launching our new charity – Wigan Arts Heritage and Culture Trust.

(More info on our website www.theoldcourts.com)

How can you help? If you have any stories or memories of the Royal Court building we'd love to hear from you! Please contact Jess at info@theoldcourts.com.



Royal Court Theatre Programme

The First World War Centenary 1914-1918

Collections from the Museum of Wigan Life

By Lynda Jackson

2018 is the final year of international commemorations marking the centenary of the First World War (1914-1918). During the war almost a quarter of British men gave military service. Globally over nine million of those who fought were killed.

By 1918 four years of war had brought devastation to many and yet worse was to come. In March 1918 the first cases of Spanish Flu appeared and quickly became a pandemic, killing an estimated 50-100 million people worldwide.

Locally the war had a devastating impact. In Wigan Borough men from all walks of life from cotton workers to the 27th Earl of Crawford had volunteered or been conscripted. Many served in the 1/5th Battalion of the Manchester Regiment or the 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers fighting on the Western Front, Gallipoli or further afield. Women volunteered as nurses and in wartime work.

The global scale of the conflict was brought home by refugees, prisoners of war and air raids. In 1914 Belgian refugees had arrived in Astley. In February 1915 German prisoners of war had arrived in Etherstone Mill, Leigh. Wounded soldiers had been cared for in grand houses such as Haigh Hall, Garswood Hall and Woodlands (Leigh and Wigan). In April 1918 seven people had been killed by a Zeppelin attack over Scholes.

When finally the Armistice was signed on 11th November 1918, over 3800 local men and women from the Wigan and Leigh area had been killed.



Robert Marsh prosthetic arm with leather glove, 1914-1918

Robert lost his arm while fighting in France with the Machine Gun Corps. He was also gassed and suffered eye damage. This was his dress arm, made by Cory and Grundy Ltd.



Imperial German Army Pickelhaube helmet and cover, 1916

First introduced in 1892 the Pickelhaube became standard issue for soldiers on active service. In 1914 regimental numbers were stenciled onto the covers. Pickelhaube means 'pointed headgear' and this example is probably an 'Ersatz' type.



Princess Mary gift box, 1914

Gift boxes were presented to British troops at Christmas 1914. Around 355,000 boxes were delivered to soldiers serving overseas. There were two kinds of boxes: smokers received tobacco products while non-smokers received writing paper and pencil.



Stamps, 1914-1918

These stamps were sold in aid of the War Relief Fund.



Trench art, 1914-1918

Trench art is a term used to describe objects made with what ever items soldiers could find around them. Some were made into working objects; others were inscribed with poems. Prisoners of war also produced items.

Leigh in 1900...

By Michael Caine

THE YEAR OF JAMES HILTON'S BIRTH. SHANGRI LA? NO, SHANGRI LEIGH!

Once upon a time Leigh folk were happy to talk of Leigh being 'The New Wigan'. You won't hear that now but in 1900 Leigh was on the up. It was on the move, making progress not steadily but rapidly: it was busy, thriving and newly established as a Charter Town. It had had an MP since 1885. In August 1899 it had become a Borough, after being a Local Board since 1875 and Urban District Council (UDC) since 1894. It had previously been three small Townships, in the Parish of Leigh, using the name since Medieval times. The Leigh Chronicle spoke in 1898 of a 'Greater Leigh', as the town sought incorporation as a borough. It was ambitious, aspiring and with good reason.

The Leigh Chronicle explained in its August 11 1899 editorial 'Let us consider the immense strides made during the Queen's reign. In 1841 the population was only 11,026, and even as late as 1871, there were only 17,621 inhabitants. In 1881, the number had risen to 21,733, while now, it is estimated at 37,500. In other words, the population has doubled in 28 years'.

Editor Josiah Rose continued, no doubt raising an appreciative pecuniary gleam in the eyes of the bankers, lawyers, professionals, tradesmen and councillors, 'Now take the rateable value. In 1890 it was in round figures £95,000, now it is upwards of £149,000'. Rateable value was the key to a Town Council raising loans for public works and improvements. He went on 'Experts are unanimous in fixing upon Leigh in the near future as the great centre of the South Lancashire coalfield'.



Market Street before demolition, Leigh, c. 1896

So what underpinned this rapid rise in status, integrity, dignity and economic affluence for the town, if not for all its population?

Large scale industries had developed rapidly, as the improved steam engines feasted on the abundance of cheap, local coal. The land was gloriously flat and easy to build on, with local clay making local bricks galore. The railways had accelerated matters after the slow progress of the area following the Turnpike Road (1762) and the canals (1795 and 1820). Leigh had been a small market town, with handloom weaving and spinning of calico and fustians being the only real industry, accompanied by farming and some coal extraction. Slowly then rapidly, textiles, coal mining and engineering took off, first carried by canal then the railways (1828 and 1864).

So how did the town change? Firstly, there was the building of giant mills, the growth of engineering works of worldwide fame, and the sinking of great mines. Secondly, mill owners put up houses for their key workers (charging rent, of course) and to a lesser extent there were pit houses. A notable exception was the nearby model village at Howe Bridge, built by the Fletcher Burrows family, noted for fair wages and employee care. Most importantly, a vigorous Council was keen on removing the slum areas and improving the town.

But certain characteristics were set and a 'Milltown' skyline arose: shrouded in soot, suffocated with smoking chimneys, choking on coal, coke and cotton fibres. When James Hilton wrote 'So Well Remembered' (1944), he based it on the Leigh of 1921, calling it

'Browdley'. He painted a dismal picture, little altered since 1900, with the hero, Councillor George Boswell, determined to replace the slums of 'Mill Street' with new modern housing for ordinary workers.

'The town consists mainly of four roomed, bathroomless houses, built in long, parallel rows, dormitories for miners and cotton operatives...'. (Immediately I see Battersby Street in Bedford and Glebe St in Westleigh, and their neighbours). 'From a small rise ... Browdly could be seen more magically at night than ever in the daytime: for at night, especially under a moon, the observer might be unaware that those glinting windows were factories and not palaces, and that shimmer beneath them was no fabled stream, but a stagnant, stinking canal.' Dirty Old Town indeed!

While not a scene to be inspired by, a grim reality of purpose filled the town by 1900. What of the industries that shaped Leigh and its people?

Cotton

Textiles had surged from domestic handloom to factory looms with the introduction of silk spinning and weaving in the 1840s. Leigh was the second most important silk town in Great Britain after Macclesfield. Cotton gradually replaced it. By 1900 there were 13 major mills, either silk or cotton, and after 1900 another nine big mills were built for cotton. Leigh Spinners still survives as the largest surviving double mill in Europe. By 1911, some 6,146 women and men were employed in textiles making Leigh the fifth largest centre in what is now Greater Manchester. 13 per cent of males and 67 per cent of females worked in textile spinning and weaving.

Coal

Coal (black diamonds) had been dug since Elizabethan times in Westleigh, through adits or bell pits. Deep mines, catering for the steam

engines installed at the mills and powering the engines that ran on the multiple mineral lines crisscrossing the town, were sunk in the later 1800s. By 1900 there were 14 deep shafted collieries. Of the 'Big Three', Bedford Pit (1876) lasted until 1967 when its contract with British Rail expired, Bickershaw (1830s) and Parsonage (1913-20) were both eventually linked underground and closed in 1992. In 1911 there were 5,782 workers including 200 women working in Leigh's pits, creating a unique landscape of cinder tracks, pit rucks and Flashes (lakes caused by subsidence). Pennington Flash (now a 170 acre country park) formed in the late 1890s by coal extraction at Bickershaw pit. 35 per cent of Leigh's males worked in the pits.

Engineering

An industrial balance was provided by engineering works and foundries. The largest, Harrison McGregor's (1872), became a world leader in agricultural machinery with offices and dealerships around the globe. Its original market had been the 50 or so farmers registered locally in 1885.

1900 saw the formation of the Anchor Cable Company, to provide wire for the Electricity Power Station of 1899

(two years before Wigan), and to cater for the electrification of the town. Acquired by Callender's Cables by the Second World War, it later became part of BICC and closed in 2001. General engineering employed 7.5 per cent of the local males and a significant number of females.

Civic Improvement!

All this industrial activity moved Leigh away from its linear growth and dependence on the Turnpike Road and canals. Growth was haphazard until the 1890s when the UDC, determined to 'improve' the town, got to grips with water, gasworks, sewage, nightsoil, buildings and roads. Traffic congestion hampered business and transport of goods. The traffic census of one week in October 1895 found 6,824 vehicles using town centre roads. Many were using the main Market Street – based on the old Turnpike Road – which was only 19 feet at its narrowest. When the tram came in 1902 it created 'posh' new ribbon development of grand houses and villas, north and south, along its route. The old, organic and poorly developed town centre roads had to be transformed.

The 'Re-Housing of the Poor Act' of 1885 allowed the council to demolish one side of Market Street



Market Street after demolition and before the new Town Hall was built, Leigh, c. 1902

in 1898-1899. Further demolitions occurred off King Street. Jones's Square, a cramped, crowded, insanitary, hotch potch of tumbledowns was levelled...and compensation paid to the landlords.

By 1901 all was completed. Market Street was transformed into the wide thoroughfare we have today. Borough status enabled the Council to take out a £50,000 loan for a new Town Hall facing the Market Square. The old Town Hall on King Street, a former police station, was replaced by the impressive municipal building the town deemed itself worthy of, despite sniffs of disapproval from Whitehall and near neighbour Atherton!

There were no less than ten other major Improvement Plans entered into by 1900.

Throughout the 1890s new, grander and taller buildings rose up. Streets and roads were paved with setts and gas-lights fitted. The Council regulated street planning so that when Hampson's Buildings (1894) were built on Railway Road, there was a proper back street and each had a privy and ashpit. The same applied in Wilkinson Street (1886) so that James Hilton was born in a 'civilised' dwelling. But what of the ordinary, less advantaged population?

Health and Wealth

In 1900 our town was 'Shangri - Leigh' not 'Shangri - La', the fabled land of contentment, peace and happiness portrayed in Hilton's most famous novel and film, 'Lost Horizon'. It was more dangerous to be a child under five than a Leigh soldier in the Transvaal. One was killed at Spion Kop and one died of fever. Back home however...

Ninety-nine children died from diarrhea, out of a total of 111 such fatalities. Of the children 91.4 per cent had been bottle fed, 8.5 per cent had been breast fed. The so called 'Murder Bottles' with India rubber tubes and teats were

inadequately cleaned and bred bacteria. They were finally banned in 1910. The total number of registered deaths was 861, a death rate of 22.9 per thousand against a national average of 18.3. But there were bigger killers yet.

One hundred and ninety seven deaths were from respiratory diseases caused by poor air quality, damp and insanitary conditions and a deficient diet. Consumption took 66 in its stride, influenza 38 and measles 35. Typhoid broke out with 56 cases in four small streets but thankfully just two deaths. A 'Random Harvest' indeed, to recall another of Hilton's novels. This happened at Westleigh Weir (the site of the old corn mill) ten minutes from Wilkinson Street, on Cotton, Corn, Clifton and Sportsman Streets. Today, a pair of dippers nest there and kingfishers dive for sticklebacks. How times and waterways change!

The Medical Officer noted that infectious diseases and diarrhea were associated with 'accumulated filth, privy middens, unpaved yards and backs'. He also cited sewer gas and the stench of blocked gullies. Leigh was dirty, dangerous and smelly away from civic improvement and new build.

The health of those in the workhouse seemed marginally better. Life was regimented, grim and unpleasant but by 1885, they had an infirmary. The town itself did not until 1908. The Poor Law Guardians placed deserted and orphaned children in 'work'. For boys it was invariably a naval training ship, while girls were placed in service locally. Experiences were mixed and often unpleasant. There was also emigration to Canada for orphans...a tough ask in any time for anyone.

In 1885 education became compulsory for children between five and ten. The 1885 Act also created 'Half Timers' who completed half a day at school and half at work...this was not an easy street for children. They had half an hour for dinner and

to get between places. There was no time to say 'Goodbye Mr Chips'.

Church schools dominated, with the exception of the Grammar School, which girls were attending before 1900. No board or council school existed in Leigh until after 1900. The councillors fiercely resisted board schools as the cost would fall on the rates.

Wealth

Nationally, half the country's net income went to just one ninth of the population. It was the same in Leigh where you had to have money to survive. Industries (strikes and stoppages withstanding) were doing well. But what of those who could never afford a doctor? What were the average wages for men?

Top of the shop were the coal hewers at the face. They could earn 30- 35 shillings a week. Other workers around a pound. A skilled engineer could expect 25s 11d, cotton operatives and labourers could get around a pound a week. Women and children were paid proportionately less. In good times, as in 1911, a male mule spinner could get 45 shillings a week. A family with all members earning could get by quite nicely. Edwardian rubbish tips testify to this, with millions of returnables thrown away.

When death, infirmity, illness or unemployment struck, the situation could change drastically, with destitution facing anyone, particularly the elderly, who previously had been 'doing nicely, thank you'. There was no real safety net.

The Boer War highlighted this. 120 Leigh men were 'Called to the Colours' as reservists or enlisted. Interestingly, several men enlisted under another name, perhaps to escape awkward relationships. A widow or infirm parents could suddenly see their son's wages disappear. A Private's pay was a derisory three to four shillings a week. Suddenly there was no money, so relief was sought in Leigh, from



Market Street with No 6 Tram, Leigh, c. 1925

the Mayor's Transvaal Fund. Some employers paid a proportion of wages as relief. Every case was investigated. A Mrs Sheeley found her 14 shillings a week was stopped by Messrs Ackers Whitley of Bickershaw Pit because 'she has been spending it on drink!'

Politics

With no local aristocracy to dominate (or hinder), the wealthy industrialists formed an upper layer. Professional men, tradesmen and small business owners were another level. Finally there were a few workers or men who supported the workers' causes. These three strata made up Leigh's councillors.

The first Council in 1899 was composed of 14 Liberals and ten Conservatives. Leigh's fledgling Labour Party arose a few years later from the Trades Council, gradually taking Liberal votes. Leigh's MPs were all Liberal until 1922 when Labour took the seat, which they hold to this day. There has never been a Tory MP.

In 1901, the miners formed 53 per cent of the electorate and were relatively influential in determining local political outcomes.

And finally...

This was the backdrop that James Hilton was born into. His was a relatively privileged place. We know he didn't stay long but then he had no choice!

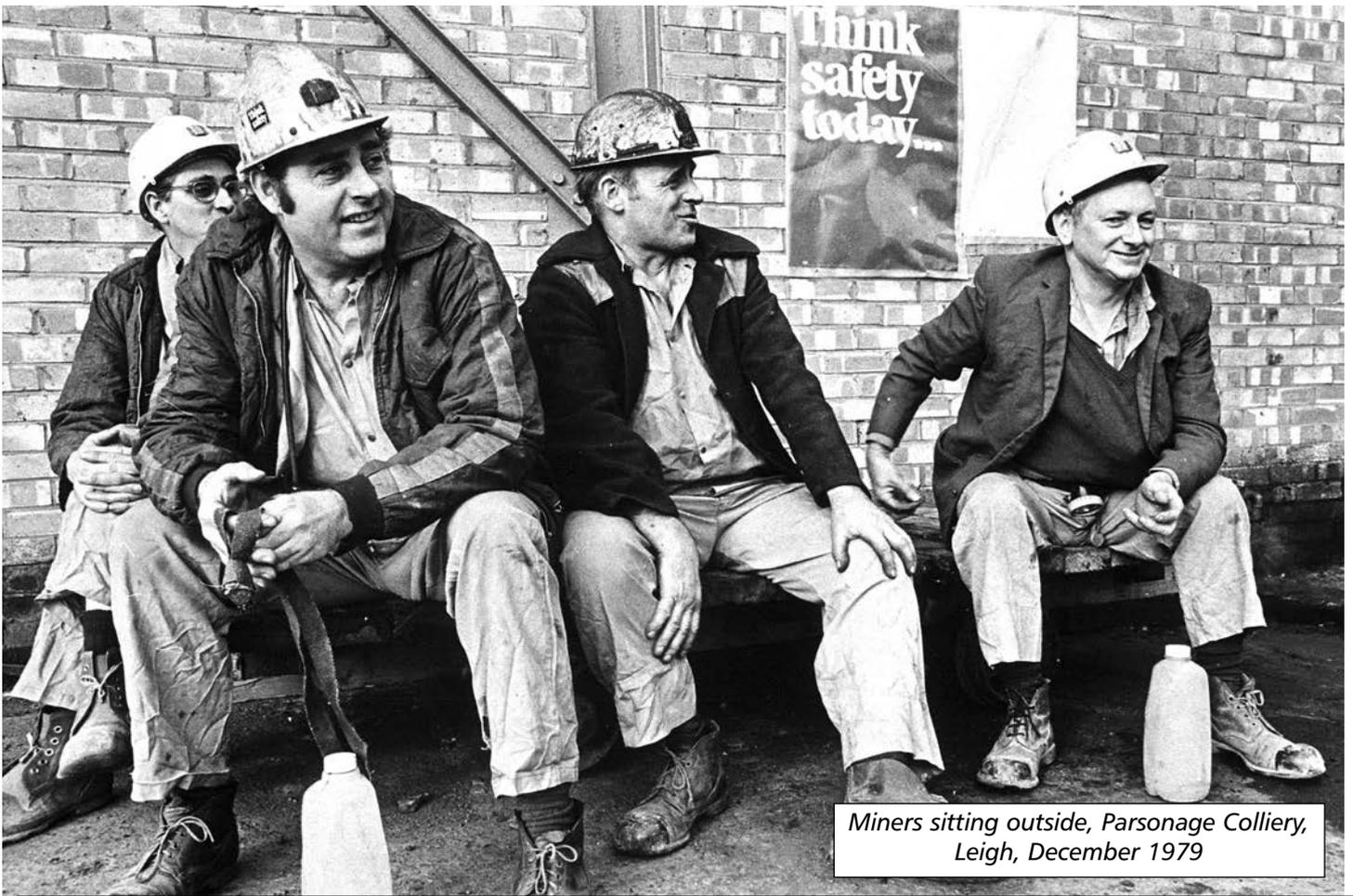
We know that his parents, who had been teachers at Bedford Wesleyan School, were living in London. His father was Headmaster at Chapel End Boys School and was the model for 'Goodbye Mr Chips'. During her pregnancy, his mother was rushed north so James would be born a 'Leyther'. I believe there was a real attachment and pride in their home town. The Hilton family had been 'Leythers' for 200 years. They had seen the town grow and flourish... smoky, dirty, unhealthy and edgy as it was. It had its own dialect, that all locals knew, whether high or low. It had a handful of breweries with some 40 licensed victuallers and

another 40 beer sellers. By 1900 there was near full employment, Leigh was 'on the up', and a good place for their child to be born...despite its drawbacks. For the times, it was doing 'alright'.

The Hilton family regularly visited Leigh, as did the adult James. Despite living in Long Beach, California, working as a screen writer, the former Guardian reporter often came back to Leigh. The last time not long before his tragic death from liver cancer in 1954.

Nowadays, many children are named after where they were conceived. If that had been the practice then, our author could well have been named 'London Hilton'... a sort of hotel of a person. As it turned out, his mind had many mansions in which to set his writings... but his first house was 26 Wilkinson Street, Leigh which today displays his Blue Plaque.

A revised version of this talk given to the James Hilton Society at Leigh on 12 May 2018.



Miners sitting outside, Parsonage Colliery, Leigh, December 1979

Twenty Five Years Gone

BY MARGARET MOLYNEUX

It's twenty five years since the final closure of Parsonage Colliery and Bickershaw Colliery (Plank Lane Pit) which once stood at each end of the 'village' surrounding St Peter's Church in Firs Lane, Leigh. Back in April 1992, 'Leigh Journal' documented the miners' procession which had taken place through the local streets, involving a short, open-air service at St Peter's. It was on this occasion that a miner's lamp was placed in church, which now hangs in the chancel.

To observe this twenty-fifth anniversary, St Peter's congregation decided to dedicate this year's annual heritage weekend to our mining heritage. Prior to 1992, the coal industry was a huge source of employment for the Leigh and Wigan area. Most people knew of someone who either worked in the pits themselves, or in connected industries.

In planning this heritage event, several local organisations were contacted for support and help with relevant records and artefacts. Publicity in the local media appealed to the general public for their memorabilia and recollections to encourage active involvement.

The weekend event was run in conjunction with Age UK Wigan Borough Bright Days Team, who provided financial and practical help. Lancashire Mining Museum at Astley Green loaned us some wonderful resources and advised us on local history. Wigan Council's Heritage department provided substantial expertise and provided digital photographs and newspaper articles. Lowton and Golborne Art Group displayed a wide range of paintings linked to the local mining industry. Golborne Ex Miners were invaluable in their support with much local knowledge and experience. Members of the congregation and local people provided photographs, paintings, miners lamps and recollections of their time in the pits – whether as surface workers, electricians, Bevin Boys, Pit Brew Lasses, Coal Queens, coal barge workers and a range of connected industries.

The event ran over three days with exhibitions on Friday 29 September and Saturday 30 September 2017. On the Sunday afternoon, a celebratory gathering was held involving readings, recollections, poems and music. Participants included Rita who

started work aged 15 as a Pit Brow Lass, Tommy who started work aged 14 on the Bridgewater Canal Coal Barge, and Tony who spoke of the British Empire Medal given to his grandfather (who had tried to save a fellow miner after a roof fall). Recollections of local miners, John and Charlie, members of the congregation of St Peter and St Paul's, Westleigh, were also read out. Lillian, poet in residence at Age UK Wigan Borough, wrote and read a poem specifically for the event. Ellie, from the Bright Days Team, entertained us with mining folk songs. Barbara and Beverley brought their Coal Queen tiaras and sashes.

It was a privilege to hear people's stories, which form a rich oral history. Charlie recollected, "It was enjoyable though I cussed it on a winter's morning.



Viewing the mining photographs on display

It was dark when you went down, dark when you came up; and dark, dusty and sweaty when you were down there. You'd pick your tallies up – a brass one and a tin one. The tin one got handed in at the start, the brass one at the end, so they knew you was back up."

Attendees were encouraged to share their own personal stories in an exhibition notebook. There were some moving contributions. One heartbreaking entry was the testimony of a woman whose father was killed at the Astley Green Colliery in 1946 when she was 4 years old. The family were due to go on holiday to the Isle of Man: he had changed his shift to an earlier one to enable the family to catch the ferry from Liverpool. He was killed, leaving his wife a widow with three young children.



Viewing memorabilia and mining artefacts



Writing personal reflections in the memorabilia book

Mining has always been a hazardous occupation with a death and injury rate unequalled by few other occupations. Underground explosions were the main danger but other risks including roof falls, haulage accidents, flooding and over-winding were always present. A memorial display of glorious sunflowers was placed in church in tribute to all those lost in mining accidents and their families who have grieved them.

The weekend event attracted many visitors. Members of the congregation acted as stewards or ran the cafe which was open for the duration of the event. People didn't simply call in, but stayed for a long time sharing their stories. There was much interest, fond memories and some tears.

Here are one or two comments from our visitors' book:

"Very informative. Enjoyed all the memories. Fantastic insight into my Dad's past career".

"Thank-you as a miner's daughter, thank you for keeping memories alive".

"Warm, friendly and fascinating conversations"

"Fascinating display. The social history and the actual history is a good blend".

"Keeping up the community spirit"

"Marvellous exhibition"

"Brings back so many memories, thank you".

This event was essentially a people's history. It attracted many from the older generation remembering times past, but it also had an intergenerational aspect with grandparents bringing in their grandchildren.

St Peter's aimed to recall our rich history and celebrate the comradeship, the pride and the community; all part and parcel of the values that we want to pass on to younger generations. Thank you to Rev Karen who launched the idea, together with Rev Judith and all the parishioners of St Peter's Church Firs Lane, and to all who took part and made this such a wonderful occasion.

By Sheila Ramsdale

Josephine Butler 1828-1906

Millicent Fawcett of the Fawcett Society described Josephine Butler, "as the most distinguished woman of the nineteenth century".

Despite this, Josephine isn't perhaps as widely known nowadays. She is viewed as a model of pioneering feminism, who dared to speak out publicly and to seek equal rights for women of all classes and in all social situations.

She was Britain's first anti-prostitution campaigners and stands out as one of our greatest social reformers. Interestingly, she is recognised in Liverpool in the Noble Women Windows of the Cathedral's Lady Chapel. This is a beautiful window and well worth a visit.

Although born into a wealthy and prominent family her life was not without tragedy. She and her husband George (who was very supportive in all her campaigns) were very happily married with four children: three boys and a girl, Eva. Unfortunately, Eva died at the age of 6 after falling from the banisters at the top of the stairs in their house. This badly affected Josephine and in the aftermath of this tragedy she became very depressed and was grief stricken.

Gradually, as she recovered, she appears to have turned more to campaigning on behalf of those less fortunate than her, this included prostitutes, whilst also promoting educational and social reform for poorer people.

When the family moved to Liverpool in 1866, George had been ordained in the Church of England and became the new head of Liverpool College.

Josephine remained grief stricken and continued to suffer from depression, something which would recur the rest of her life.

Josephine threw herself into working with women in the local workhouses, hoping, as she wrote, "to find some pain keener than my own - to meet with people more unhappy than myself". She was committed to helping those worse off than herself. She had no clear plan, other than to help.

"My sole wish", she explained, "was to plunge into the heart of some human misery, and to say to afflicted people, 'I understand, I too, have suffered' ". As a result of rescuing many young women and girls from the workhouse, and either finding them homes, or taking them into her household, she worked to set up her own refuge for poor women.

She took great interest in women's issues generally. She started writing, with her first published article being 'The Education and Employment of Women'. This was followed by 'Women's Work and Women's Culture'.

In 1869, she travelled to Switzerland to try to improve her health and while there became aware of European policies, designed to regulate prostitutes, and of Britain's Contagious Diseases Act of 1864, 1866, and 1869. These laws effectively legalised prostitution and the sex trade.

They aimed to control the spread of sexually transmitted diseases in the army and navy and required all women living in garrison towns and posts to submit to registration and regular internal examinations.

The women were regarded as the problem, and not the men who frequented local brothels. She was publicly outraged by the injustice of these measures.

She considered the laws regulating prostitution to be nothing short of barbaric, especially the decision not to examine men because they would resist. By contrast, any woman believed to be a prostitute could be reported to the authorities and, if found infected, sent to prison for up to three months in a secure hospital. This treatment was regardless of a woman's family commitments.

Josephine considered these double standards. Soon, women were being examined in many towns and the men could use prostitutes with impunity while at the same time punishing women. This disgusted her and she led a campaign to repeal these laws.

In 1870, Josephine became the leader of the National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act. As leader of the association, she argued against the presumption of guilt on the part of the woman, and sought instead to question the morality of the men involved, bringing them to account for their behaviour.

She travelled all over the country, speaking with great passion, sometimes putting herself in danger, surprising many with her frankness and honesty on the taboo subjects of prostitution and morality. She would describe in great detail the actual procedures women had to endure in a very humiliating manner.

Her husband supported all her campaigns and they appear to have been a devoted couple. He



Josephine Butler, National Portrait Gallery

was constantly being warned that her behaviour would have a negative effect on his academic career and his connections with the Church of England.

However, this was not the case in Wigan. Looking through local papers, there was a strong campaign to support Josephine Butler. Interestingly, Wigan had its own committee trying to repeal these acts. The Reverend W. Drew, honorary secretary of the local

branch, read out a letter of support, both from himself and also from Reverend T. Higham (Vicar of St Catharine's Church), supporting Josephine in her cause. ('Wigan Observer', 20 May 1870).

She was invited to a public meeting at the Public Hall under the presidency of the Mayor to deliver an address. They announced they had had letters published in the 'Wigan Observer'

(19th May 1870), giving a brief outline of what they had done in the district towards obtaining repeal of the Acts.

This included pamphlets being distributed. Fifteen meetings had been held in Wigan and district and 6,938 signatures had been obtained. Indications showed that many members of the Church of England supported Josephine and a resolution was passed acknowledging the fact, as well as their warmest thanks for the excellent address she had delivered that evening.

She was roundly applauded when she asked the people of Wigan, "shall the same country which paid its millions for the abolition of negro slavery, now pay its millions for the establishment of white slavery within its own bosom?"

Josephine called upon Victorian notions of religion, marriage and womanly solidarity to challenge Parliament itself and to speak out on issues that it was considered disgraceful for a woman to understand, let alone mention.

When the Contagious Diseases Acts were finally repealed in 1886, it was finally recognised this had been as a result of her endeavours. Josephine and her husband carried on offering food, shelter and tender nursing as well as training to poor, unfortunate women and never spoke to them about their sin, never asked them about their past lives but was always positive and optimistic and offered them the hope of a new life.

An exhibition of her life and work in London in 2004 described Josephine as a 'heroine for our age', a very apt epitaph for a truly remarkable woman.

References:

Wigan Observer, Friday 20 May, 1870.

**Thanks to Rita Musa,
Wigan Archives.**

I REMEMBER

BY JOHN TARVER

John Tarver, 1850-1932

Born in Grayrigg – Died in Appley Bridge

Goods Agent for the London and North Western Railway (L&NWR) from 1865-1910, based at Wigan from 1877.

This article first appeared in L&NWR Gazette in June 1920 and also appeared in the Westmorland Gazette.

With thanks to Christine Barbour-Moore, great-granddaughter of John Tarver, for bringing the article to our attention and producing the transcript.

In the year 1865, on Friday 11 August, the writer was occupied with his usual tasks at the Village School in Grayrigg, Westmorland when a messenger came from the station to say that Mr Fitzsimons wanted to see him at Lancaster Station and he must go that day. A journey of nearly 30 miles was involved but at 5 o'clock he found himself in the sanctum of the worthy just named.

At that hour the office work was still proceeding but Mr Fitzsimons was engaged with his Chief Clerk and there was an interval of suspense, which to me seemed an age. When it ended and I was called to the table. The old gentleman eyed me over his spectacles with a long searching look, "Well", he remarked, "You're a big lad – do you ever wallop your father?". "No, sir", I gasped in holy horror. "Oh very well, that'll do. Mr Bayley, write to Mr Brough and tell him to start this lad at Kendal Station on Monday".

In conformity with this request, I was at the goods office at Kendal on the morning of Monday 14 August 1865 and the collar I was to wear for forty five years was put on, forthwith. I was fortunate in having Mr Brough for my first chief.

During the stress of the late war, various economies were being effected. All the envelopes arriving at the station were now being 'turned'

for second use. The very first job I was put to was to turn the envelopes which had brought that morning's letters and so long as I continued to hold the position of 'gum major', this was part of my daily work.

My first year's emolument was at the rate of five shillings per week and I had to leave home and go into lodgings. Advances were granted as follows: second year to 20 pounds, third year to 30 pounds, fourth year to 40 pounds and fifth year to 50 pounds. Clearly my first and second year's services were sold below cost price. Such matters in those days were regulated by the good old law of supply and demand and it would appear the market was rather badly against supply at the time of my appointment. The new-fangled idea of a living wage had not been invented.

In these by-gone days, the check upon passengers using the railways was not so efficient as it is today and there was a good deal of what was known as 'running the blockade'. I admit having sinned – silver was scarce and a desire to see a bit of the world overwhelming at times. My most ambitious flight probably was a trip from Kendal to Liverpool and back with an office pal. This is over fifty years ago whilst I was still in my teens. Having made this gratuitous confession my burdened conscience will no doubt experience due relief.



John Tarver, as a young man

Should official notice of it be followed by official action, I must plead the statute of limitations.

In our distant orbit we were not often visited by the high officials from Euston but when the question of building new offices and warehouses came up, we had a visit from the Chairman (Mr Moon) and the General Manager. As Chief Clerk, I was called upon to turn up the previous year's comparative statement. Placing a thumb upon the tonnage and forefinger on the receipts, "that's so much per ton", said Mr Moon. The sum was beyond my capacity in mental arithmetic but I worked it out afterwards and found that this hasty approximation was absolutely correct.

Speaking of daring innovations brings me to the point that when I was transferred to Wigan in 1877. Three or four men were employed in going over the network of private sidings, which falls within the work of the Wigan Agent, to obtain signatures for the traffic delivered day by day. It was decided to dispense with this routine and to rely solely upon the number-takers' records. It may be noted that

there are about 35 number-takers on the staff book at Wigan. Whilst this is not intended to be in any way a treatise on my old locale, here in condensed form, are two or three statistics which maybe of interest in passing: local steam shed – 133 locomotives stabled; mileage of central assembly and sorting sidings – about 18 miles; coal outwards (railed in Wigan area) record day – 31,000 tons.

The period of my Agency at Wigan was happily immune from serious accidents. In nearly thirty years we had only one fatality to staff at the station – the case of a poor Checker, accidentally knocked out of a truck.

Against this has to be set the murder of Detective Kidd, under very dramatic circumstances on the evening of Sunday 29 September 1895. This was the climax to a long course of weekend thieving to which the Company's premises had been exposed. Detective Kidd and a brother officer, just before dusk, came upon a gang of men who were plundering a truck in the goods yard. Detective Kidd made a dash for two men in the wagon; a third man ran and was chased by the other officer. Detective Kidd was overpowered by the two ruffians in the truck and one held him down whilst the other stabbed him. All the gang escaped at the time but eventually the third man (who ran) turned Queen's Evidence and the other two were brought to justice and one was hanged. But this is not quite the kind of incident on which the mind cares to linger.

In a busy centre, an Agent finds his office doorway a constant thoroughfare, for everyone who has a grievance, but his most piquant experience is likely to arise on claim matters. Claims subjects were then dealt with at the District Offices and not a penny of compensation could be parted with without direct sanction. I'll give an outline of one of these.

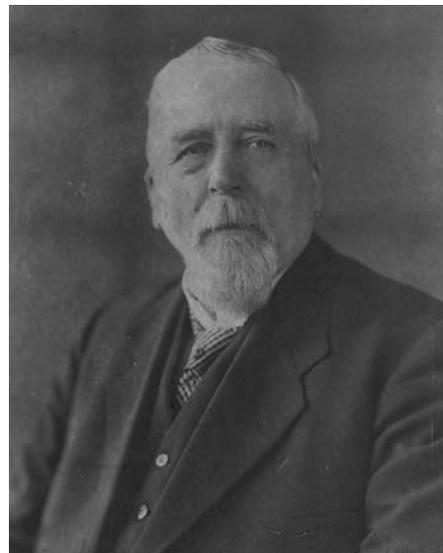
A quarter of a century ago, the company's clients at Wigan included two gentlemen, dealers in livestock, who traded in partnership. The cattle dock at Wigan is situated rather remotely at the back of the coal yard and at the time of the incident was not specially fenced in. One day a wagon of milch cows had arrived



John Tarver in middle age

from Holyhead for the parties named and had been placed by the shunters at the cattle dock. One of the two came to enquire for the stock and seeing the truck in position and none of the Company's men in view took upon himself to let the animals out. He drove them off the premises and was rattling them off up the street at top speed when he was noticed by one of our yardman, who immediately set out in pursuit.

When the two got in touch, a noisy difference sprang up between them and this led on to a lively bout of fisticuffs in which – let it be recorded – the Company's prestige (as well as its interest) was upheld and the drover with his fugitive stock were brought back into the yard until the formalities of delivery had been complied with. About the middle of the following week, this dealer walked into my office and complained that these particular



John Tarver, taken on his 77th birthday

cattle had been injured in transit. A statement in detail was taken of the alleged injuries and losses said to have resulted on sale and immediately the man was clear of the door-step.

I hurried off one of my staff to find the partner and get a similar statement from him before the two should have the opportunity of comparing notes. In this he succeeded. Considerable discrepancy was anticipated but when the two statements were compared, there was not a single particular in which they agreed or approached agreement. A claim soaring into three figures followed in due season. Some of the cattle were seen by the company's veterinary surgeon who found one with milk fever but reported he could find no trace of transit injury.

After full and searching enquiry, the claim was declined but not much grass had grown when notice came that an action had been entered at Dublin for recovery. This was at a time when one of the periodic and unhappy outbursts of Irish agrarian unrest chanced to be at its most acute stage. On the day fixed for the trial I was present at the courts with the witnesses for the Company including the veterinary surgeon and our boxer. Our case was not reached on the date. We were asked by our solicitors when the court rose to be present at the opening hour next morning sharp, as our case was to be the first taken – a request which was duly honoured – but we were perplexed by the fact that when the judge took his seat, our legal gentlemen were not to be seen and more so when some other case was called.

We were told that our case had been settled out of court and withdrawn. We could not of course leave Dublin without confirmation of this and at once set out for the Solicitors Office. "Yes", I was told, "we have paid them fifty pounds". We were spoiling for a fight, but with this announcement all our ardour dropped into our boots. "Well", I said, "I think you have paid about £49.19s.6d too much". "I daresay we have", was the reply, "but we were afraid of the jury". The plaintiffs, poor chaps, have both long since gone west.

Wigan Little Theatre's

Seventieth Season Anniversary

Generations learning from each other

We are members of Wigan Little Theatre's newly reformed Youth Theatre and on joining we learned that this season is the seventieth in the theatre on Crompton Street. We were invited to present a special anniversary show, in which older members spoke on film about their experiences in certain plays and we then performed excerpts from those productions.

We first met the older members when we took part in a speed dating type event. We interviewed them and then we actually saw photographs of them in their younger days when we visited the Archives in Leigh.

One of the group, Deryn, said, "We were fascinated to see all the theatre records and understand the rich history of the place. It's intriguing to see how the theatre has progressed over the decades and we are excited to be the ones to carry on the legacy".

We also saw a lot of artefacts related to Wigan, Leigh and the surrounding districts. After we had explored many of photographs of the plays we would perform, we looked at other areas of interest, for example, our own streets and saw how they had developed into the areas they are now.

It was interesting to hear that the Archives are always seeking volunteers and young people get work experience at the Archives and expand their minds and knowledge of such an old Borough that we live in.

Everyone who took part in the visit and the show felt they knew much more about the organisation they joined and we are looking forward to our production of 'The Witches' in November 2018.



Wigan Little Theatre celebrating 70 seasons

Miss Weeton and Parr Hall

St Helens

by Alan Roby



Earlier this year an article appeared in the 'St Helens Star' newspaper about Parr Hall, St Helens, having once been referred to on an 1890 map as Parr Hall Farm. This prompted me to respond to the newspaper with relevant information which may interest 'Past Forward' readers.

Parr Hall had once stood in the Blackbrook area of St Helens. During the early nineteenth century it was referred to as a 'Boarding Academy for Young Ladies' ('Baines' Lancashire Directory', 1825). Its joint principals were a Mr and Mrs Grundy. For a number of years from 1819, Parr Hall was regularly visited by Miss Nelly Weeton (1776-1849), whose daughter, Mary, boarded at the school. Mary had been sent to the school at the age of four by her father, Aaron Stock, with the sole purpose of ensuring his wife could have no further contact or influence on their daughter.

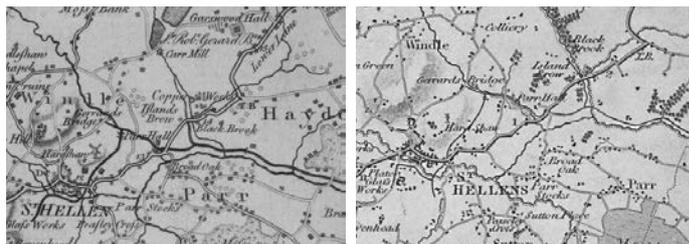
In 1814, Miss Weeton had entered into a disastrous marriage with St Helens born Aaron Stock. At the time of his marriage to Miss Weeton, Stock lived in Wigan and was the owner of a near-bankrupt cotton spinning business, located off Chapel Lane. Just nine months after the marriage a daughter, Mary, was born, who eventually became a pawn in a tug-of-war between husband and wife. At that time the law was such that a woman who entered into marriage no longer existed as an individual. In addition to owning his wife, all her worldly goods became the property of her husband. This meant that their daughter, Mary, was also Mr Stock's property.

In the early part of 1822, Mrs Stock was forced to sign a Deed of Separation, the alternative was possible starvation or prison, and even threatened incarceration into 'lunatic asylum'. She was not allowed to read the Deed for herself, so it was read to her, only once. On

hearing the Deed's conditions, she signed with the comment: "I find I have forever signed away my child". This was only the beginning of Mrs Stock's complete degradation and humiliation. She was also ejected from the family home in Standishgate, Wigan, with two further conditions: she was not allowed to live within two-and-a-half miles of Wigan, and allowed no more than three annual visits a year to see her daughter, and even then only under the strictest of conditions.

Banned from Wigan, Mrs Stock then sought refuge as a lodger in an Upholland farmhouse, from where she regularly walked to Parr Hall in the uncertain hope of seeing Mary. The distance to Parr Hall was seven miles each way. Her journey was by one of two routes: From Upholland via Tontine, Far Moor (Orrell), Winstanley, Senela Green (Garswood) and Blackbrook. On another occasion she walked via Billinge but she became lost a little past Billinge. Concerned about her safety because the countryside was sparsely populated, it seems that her favourite route was via Far Moor and Winstanley, Senela Green to Blackbrook.

Parr Hall had been associated with Queen Catherine Parr's ancestors. On the death of Queen Catherine's father in 1517, who had owned part of the manor, it passed successively to the Byroms of Lowton, the Claytons of Liverpool and the Orrells of Blackbrook. In 1778, it was described as a 'capital mansion house'. The two maps I referred to locate Parr Hall, are William Yates' Map of Lancashire, 1786 and Greenwood's Map of Lancashire, 1818. There is no reference on either map to Parr Hall as a farm. My personal opinion is that reference to Parr Hall as a 'farm' is an error. I should additionally mention that in the same 'Baines' Directory', out of 29 farms and farmers listed there is no reference to any farm located in the Parr area of St Helens.



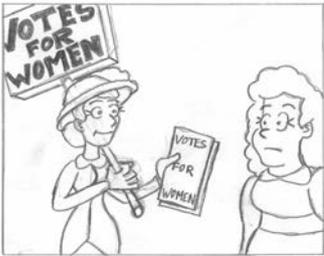
Miss Weeton, Governess and Traveller, edited by Alan Roby and published by Wigan Archives, hardback, 450 pages, £20. ISBN 978-1-5262-0553-7. Available from Waterstones, Amazon and independent bookshops or from missweetonbook.wordpress.com.

VOTES FOR WOMEN

Chris lives in Golborne and is a volunteer at the Archives & Leigh Local Studies. Chris supports the Archives putting his artistic talent to work producing wonderful cartoons based on the Borough's heritage.

Here is his interpretation of the arrest of Florence Clarkson in Leigh in 1909. Chris' cartoons have been used to support work with local schools to help children learn about the history of the campaign for women's suffrage.

1. Once upon a time a group of suffragettes came to Leigh. They handed out leaflets to people in the town.



4. The suffragettes tried to get into a meeting at Leigh Co-operative Hall but the police stopped them.



7. Florence said she only hit the policeman once. The policeman said Florence hit him five or six times.



10. In prison Florence could hear people shouting.



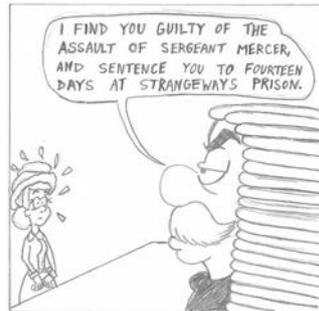
2. They wanted MPs (Members of Parliament) to give women the vote.



5. One of the suffragettes, Florence Clarkson, was arrested for hitting a policeman.



8. Florence was found guilty. She was sentenced to 14 days in Strangeways Prison.



11. Some of the suffragettes were outside the prison. They shouted 'we support you' to Florence.



3. They went to the square in Leigh and told the crowd they wanted votes for women.



6. The other suffragettes escaped, one of them in a tram to Bolton.



9. Florence went on hunger strike in prison.



12. Florence returned to Leigh with other suffragettes. She stood on the stage in the Hippodrome where she received cheers and support from the men and women of Leigh.



Information for Contributors

We always welcome articles and letters for publication from both new and existing contributors.

If you would like to submit an article for **PAST FORWARD**, please note that:

- Publication is at discretion of Editorial Team
- The Editorial Team may edit your submission
- Published and rejected submissions will be disposed of, unless you request for them to be returned
- Submissions may be held on file for publication in a future edition
- Articles must be received by the copy date if inclusion in the next issue is desired

Submission Guidelines

- Electronic submissions are preferred, although handwritten ones will be accepted
- We prefer articles to have a maximum length of 1,000 words
- Include photographs or images where possible – these can be returned if requested
- Include your name and address – we will not pass on your details to anyone unless you have given us permission to do so

We aim to acknowledge receipt of all submissions.

CONTACT DETAILS:

pastforward@wigan.gov.uk or
The Editor at **PAST FORWARD**,
Museum of Wigan Life,
Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU.

Leigh POW Box! Help needed!

An amazing First World War artefact has been donated to the Borough by an American donor. This small wooden box was made by German prisoner of war, August Tilinski, while he was imprisoned in Leigh in 1916. The Museum team would love to find out more and are looking for a volunteer to research August Tilinski and his story. If you're interested, please get in touch with lynda.jackson@wigan.gov.uk or call 01942 828122.

WIGAN BOROUGH ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE NETWORK

Wigan Borough Environment & Heritage Network is the representative body for all local societies, groups and individuals interested in protecting and promoting the Borough's Heritage and Natural Environment.

The network provides advice, speakers, site visits and partnership working with Wigan Council, Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles, Greenheart and other relevant bodies.

All are welcome to our meetings, held every six weeks at the Museum of Wigan Life.

For further details please contact the Secretary on 01942 700060, joe41@blueyonder.co.uk or visit www.wiganheritage.com

Aspull and Haigh Historical Society

Meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month at Our Lady's RC Church Hall, Haigh Road, Aspull from 2pm to 4pm. All are welcome, contact Barbara Rhodes for further details on 01942 222769.

Atherton Heritage Society

Monthly meetings held on second Tuesday of each month in St Richard's Parish Centre, Mayfield Street, Atherton at 7.30pm.

14 August AGM, starts 7.00pm, followed by 'Theatre and Acting: Inspirational Women of the North West', by Richard Sivill
11 September, 'Atherton to Armenabad', by David Kaye
9 October, 'Underground Manchester', by Ken Warrender
13 November, 'Sri Lanka', part 2', by Brian White

Admission – Members £1, Non Members £2, including refreshments.
Contact Details:
Margaret Hodge, 01942 884893.

Billinge History and Heritage Society

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month at Billinge Chapel End Labour Club at 7.30pm. There is a door charge of £2.

Please contact Geoff Crank for more information on 01695 624411 or at Gcrank_2000@yahoo.co.uk

Culcheth Local History Group

The Village Centre, Jackson Avenue. Second Thursday of each month. Doors open 7.15pm for 7.30pm start. Members £10 Visitors £2 Enquiries: Zoe Chaddock – 01925 752276 (Chair)

Hindley & District History Society

Meetings are held on the second Monday of the month at 7.00pm at Tudor House, Liverpool Road, Hindley. Please contact Mrs Joan Topping on 01942 257361 for information.

Leigh & District Antiques and Collectables Society

The society meets at Leigh RUFC, Beech Walk, Leigh. New members are always welcome and further details available from Mr C Gaskell on 01942 673521.

Leigh & District History

www.leighanddistricthistory.com
An exciting new, free, local history website, covering Leigh and the surrounding districts. Still in its infancy, it already boasts a list of births, marriages and deaths, 1852-1856, including cemetery internments, nineteenth century letters from soldiers serving abroad, a scrapbook of interesting articles, local railway accidents and an embryonic photograph gallery. There are also links to other sites covering historic and genealogical interest.

Leigh Family History Society

The Leigh & District Family History Help Desk is available every Monday afternoon (except Bank Holidays) from 12.30pm to 2.30pm.

There is no need to book an appointment for this Help Desk, which can be reached by lift.

Monthly meetings held in the Derby Room, Leigh Library at 7.30pm on the third Tuesday of each month (except July, August and December), contact Mrs G McClellan (01942 729559)

Lancashire Local History Federation

The Federation holds several meetings each year, with a varied and interesting programme. For details visit www.lancashirehistory.org or call 01204 707885.

Skelmersdale & Upholland Family History Society

The group meets at Upholland Library Community Room, Hall Green, Upholland, WN8 0PB, at 7.00pm for 7.30pm start on the first Tuesday of each month; no meeting in July, August and January. December is a meal out at The Plough at Lathom. For more information please

contact Bill Fairclough, Chairman on 07712766288 or Caroline Fairclough, Secretary, at carolinefairclough@hotmail.com

Wigan Civic Trust

If you have an interest in the standard of planning and architecture, and the conservation of buildings and structures in our historic town, come along and meet us. Meetings are held on the second Monday of the month at 7.30pm. The venue is St George's Church, Water Street, Wigan WN1 1XD. Contact Mr A Grimshaw on 01942 245777 for further information.

Wigan Archaeological Society

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month, at 7.30pm, in the Standish Suite at the Bocket Arms on Mesnes Road - on the first Wednesday of the month (except January and August). There is a car park adjacent on the left. Admission is £2 for members and £3 for guests. For more information call Bill Aldridge on 01257 402342. You can also visit the website at www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk

Wigan Family and Local History Society

We meet on the second Wednesday at 6.45pm, at St Andrews Parish Centre. Please contact wigan.fhs@gmail.com to find out more information. Attendance fees are £2.50 per meeting for both members and visitors. Our aim is to provide support, help, ideas and advice for members and non members alike. For more information please visit, www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory/ or see us at our weekly Monday afternoon helpdesks at the Museum of Wigan Life.

Wigan Local History & Heritage Society

We meet on the first Monday of each month at Beech Hill Book Cycle at 6.30pm. Admission to the meeting is £2.50. For more information please contact Sheila Ramsdale at sheila.ramsdale@blueyonder.co.uk

Dear Past Forward

The letter from Andy Strowman (Past Forward Issue No 78) brought back a memory of meeting a ballerina from a London ballet company on a cold dark night in the winter about 1951.

From 1951 to 1953 to earn spending money while studying for my A Levels at Leigh Grammar School, on Friday evenings after school I delivered meat orders (rations) on a pannier bike for my father, John Platt from the butchers shop at 224 Chapel Street (demolished and now part of Victoria Garage's car park).

One delivery was to a cottage in Bangor Fold, immediately facing Butts Basin on the Bridgewater Canal. Sitting at the living room table was a young lady, a few years older than myself, whom the proud parents introduced me to and informed me was a ballerina with a London ballet company. While suitably impressed to remember the incident, I can't claim to remember her name. Was this Flora MacDonald?

Apart from the coincidence of the ballerina, the location at Butts Basin and her parents being customers of Platt's butchers, 224 Chapel Street was unoccupied (apart from the shop). It had been condemned as unfit for habitation soon after the birth of my sister Ann in 1932, when my parents moved into a council house. There were three bedrooms upstairs, a quite large room at the top of the stairs over the living room, which would have been perfectly suitable to be used for ballet classes.

The circumstances related above certainly convinced me, hence this email. It does not surprise me that my father and his brother Harry, who shared the business on Chapel Street, would have allowed the premises to be used for ballet. They were both generous to a fault.

Yours faithfully, George Platt

NB Further research has revealed Flora MacDonald Wilkins married Leonard B Whittaker in Leigh in late 1954. Formerly of Bangor Fold, her death on 22 Oct 2015 aged 87 was announced in Leigh Journal on 12 Nov 2015.



A picture of the Butcher's Shop at 224 Chapel Street in Leigh

Child's Play – a Celebration of Childhood

*'It was the best of times,
it was the worst of times'*

CHARLES DICKENS, GREAT EXPECTATIONS



Childhood can be a magical time full of love, family and wonderful experiences that shape the life ahead. But it wasn't like that for all children. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries many children faced extreme poverty, living in poor housing with little access to medical care or personal hygiene. Others were born in the workhouse. For those that survived past birth, diseases such as scarlet fever, measles and mumps meant many, rich or poor, were lucky to survive their fifth birthday.

Children often did paid work, looked after younger siblings or helped the family business. Schools were largely for the wealthy until the education reforms of the late Victorian era. Boys and girls had very different expectations and experiences. Childhood in Wigan Borough was shaped by family income, gender and urban/rural life.

A new exhibition at the Museum of Wigan Life examines what it was like to be a child living in Victorian times and explores how it was different to the childhood of today.

Come along to discover how very young children were put to work and experience how they played and learned. You will see what it was like to be a chimney sweep with an interactive chimney activity and sample how the Victorians learned at school. This **FREE** interactive exhibition is suitable for all ages and is open now.

For more information contact 01942 828128 or email wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk

How to Find Us



Museum of Wigan Life & Wigan Local Studies

Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU

Telephone 01942 828128

heritage@wigan.gov.uk

Mon-Wed 9am-2pm Thursday-Friday 12pm-5pm
Saturday 9am-2pm

Archives & Leigh Local Studies

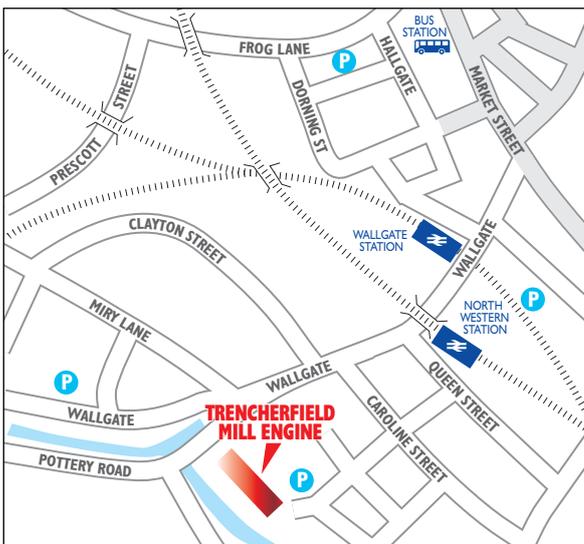
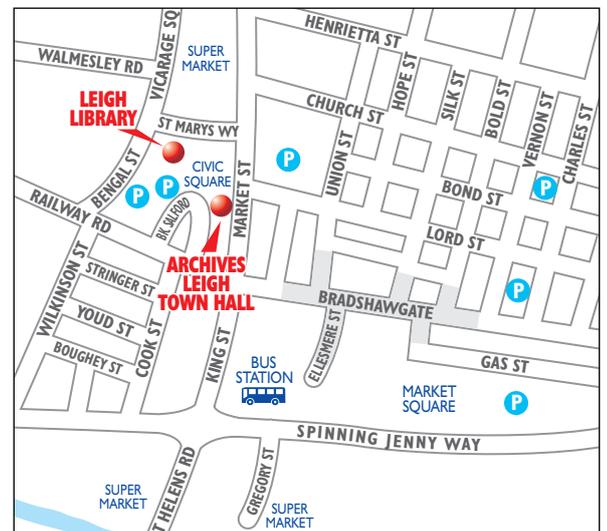
(temporary location until 2020)

Leigh Library, Leigh WN7 1EB

Telephone 01942 404430

archives@wigan.gov.uk

Mon-Wed 9am-2pm Thursday-Friday 12pm-5pm



Trencherfield Mill Engine

Wigan Pier Quarter, Heritage Way,

Wigan WN3 4EF

Telephone 01942 828128

b.rowley@wigan.gov.uk

Please see website for Steaming Sunday calendar

YOUR LOCAL MUSEUM

Bolton Bury
Oldham Rochdale
Salford Stockport
Tameside Wigan

Take a closer look www.gmmg.org.uk



GREATER MANCHESTER MUSEUMS GROUP